

# IMMANUEL KANT

1724 • 1924

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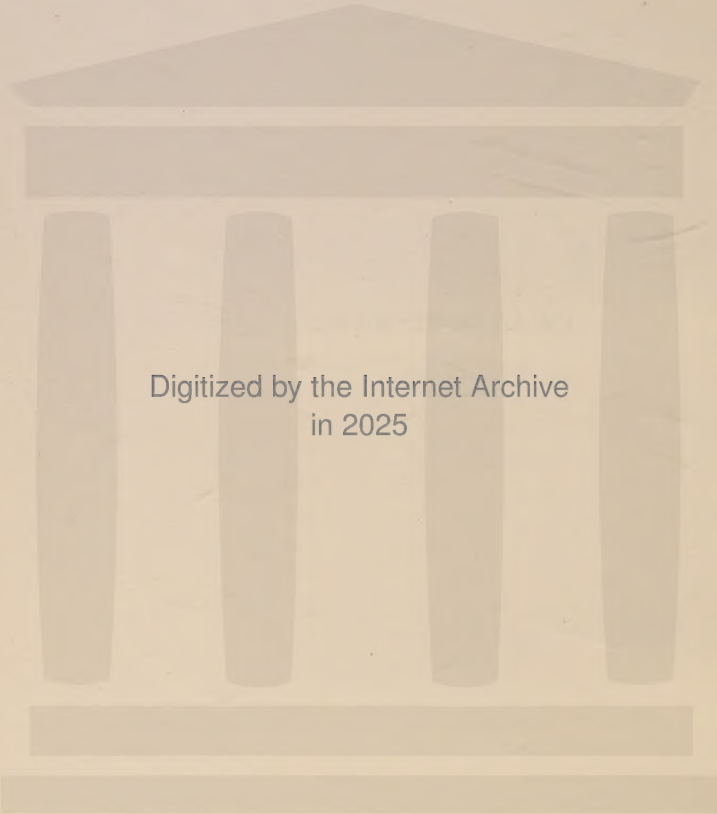
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IMMANUEL KANT

1724-1924



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# IMMANUEL KANT

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE PAPERS that follow were originally prepared with a view to the specific needs of the various sessions of the bicentenary commemoration of Kant held at Northwestern University on December 4 and 5, 1924. They were not written for technical students of philosophy nor, in most cases at least, with a thought of publication either separately or as a collection. The controlling factor in the formulation of the program, moreover, was not the aim of presenting a delicately balanced account of all the elements and phases of Kant's complex philosophy; it was primarily that of paying tribute to a commanding intellectual figure in such a way that classes in philosophy and groups of other students and the interested public might receive illuminating introduction to his personality and thought and a fresh stimulus to, and an enhanced appreciation of philosophic study. It was in response to numerous requests from individuals attending the celebration and with the hope that the addresses might prove of wider interest and value that the publication of the collection as a whole was decided upon. In three instances, as may be noted, writers have preferred to modify somewhat the titles of their papers, but in no case has the content been substantially altered.

On the whole it has seemed preferable to present the papers according to the order of the printed program. The latter we annex hereto in order to give some idea of the character of the celebration and of the specific occasions for which the various papers were designed.

EDWARD L. SCHAUB.



## PROGRAM

The general public will be cordially welcomed at all meetings marked by a star. Attention is also invited to an exhibit of portraits, books and other materials assembled for the commemoration in Harris Hall 107.

### THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4

- 12:30 P. M.....University Club  
Luncheon
- \*3:00 P. M.....Harris Hall 107  
*The Legacy of Kant* (Opening Address)  
Edward L. Schaub, Northwestern University  
*Philosophical Modernism and the Kantian Ethics*  
G. T. W. Patrick, The State University of Iowa
- 5:00 P. M.....629 Garrett Place  
Discussion Circle, preceding dinner at the home of  
Edward L. Schaub
- \*8:00 P. M.....Harris Hall 107  
*Quartette for Strings, Opus 18, No. 1.....Beethoven*  
String Quartette from the School of Music,  
Northwestern University  
*The Literary and Social Environment of Kant*  
Martin Schuetze, The University of Chicago  
*Kant, The Seminal Thinker*  
J. A. Leighton, State University of Ohio
- ### FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5

- \*10:00 A. M.....Chapel, Fisk Hall  
*The Religion of Kant*  
E. S. Ames, The University of Chicago
- \*10:30 A. M.....Harris Hall 107  
*Kant as a Student of Natural Science*  
S. G. Martin, Northwestern University  
*Kant's Philosophy of Religion*  
J. H. Farley, Lawrence College
- \*11:30 A. M.....Harris Hall 107  
*Kant's Philosophy of Law*  
E. L. Hinman, The University of Nebraska
- 12:30 P. M.....University Club  
Luncheon
- \*3:00 P. M.....Harris Hall 107  
*Kant's Doctrines Concerning Perpetual Peace*  
J. F. Crawford, Beloit College  
*Sources and Influence of Kant's Aesthetic Theory in England*  
E. F. Carritt, Oxford University
- 4:30 P. M.....Harris Hall, Social Room  
Reception and Tea given by the University Guild for visiting  
guests and members of the faculty of  
Northwestern University
- 6:00 P. M.....University Club  
Dinner
- \*8:00 P. M.....Harris Hall 107  
*Kant and Koenigsberg* (Illustrated lecture)  
E. L. Hinman, The University of Nebraska  
*Kant's Copernican Revolution*  
Frank Thilly, Cornell University



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THE LEGACY OF KANT



## THE LEGACY OF KANT

IT IS altogether fitting that we break sufficiently from our accustomed round of lectures and other college activities to unite, during these days, in commemorating the life and work of Immanuel Kant. Born two hundred years ago, he lived all of his eighty years in, or in close proximity to, his native city, Koenigsberg, in far remote East Prussia. His attachment to this spot, moreover, was one of sentiment, not of necessity. Here he felt himself in the deepest sense at home. Persistently, therefore, he declined to leave even under the lure of positions of greater prominence and immediate influence. His language incorporates provincialisms and his thought is deeply marked by the spirit of his land as well as of his age. Constant struggles with a step-motherly nature had developed in the people of that bleak Baltic country hardness, rugged simplicity, systematic and sustained effort, self-reliance and independence, and a discipline and self-denial that yielded but little to the pressure of clamorous desires or to the blandishments of pleasure. Reason and will, organization and decisiveness,—these were traits of potency, strictly subordinating to themselves the claims of passing experience and of fugitive impulse. This set of values, so deeply grounded in the conditions under which life was carried on and so thoroughly validated by its successes and failures, determined much in the way both of the form and of the substance of Kant's philosophical writings. More particularly is this true of the ethical works. The latter

might even be described as an analysis and defense of the values mentioned, and therefore also of Kant's people. True as all this is, it should nevertheless not be overlooked that the supremacy of these values has by no means been restricted to one time and place. On the contrary, it has been acknowledged by many who must be counted among the wisest and best of all ages and climes. Furthermore, Kant's deepest concern was the discovery and validation of truth. Alike in his central endowments and by choice he was a philosopher, and thus a thoughtful and vitally concerned spectator of all time and existence. By virtue of extraordinarily keen analytic powers, firm intellectual grasp and rare catholicity of interests, he so wrought that vital influences have radiated from him upon subsequent thought and practice throughout the entire civilized world. Thus, he effectually transcended all narrow limits of space and time and became identified with mankind as a whole.

In our own land, commemorations of Kant have hitherto not been common. Elsewhere, however, the situation has been quite otherwise. Not only in Königsberg but in all thirty-five centers where there are local branches of the *Kantgesellschaft*, and in numerous other localities, every recurrence of Kant's natal day is an occasion when tribute is paid to him, and when his methods and conclusions are very especially and explicitly put to the test of current problems. Special anniversaries, such as the centenary of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and that of Kant's death, have been observed even more widely and elaborately. Great has been the importance of these commemorations—witness merely that it was as a contribution to the former that Hans Vaihinger published his important commentary on Kant and that Max Müller completed his well-nigh indispensable translation of the *Critique* into English. These earlier celebrations, however, have been quite overshadowed by those held during the present year. In as



many as fourteen different countries, commemorations of one form or another have in recent months been held. Numerous monographs and detailed studies, commemorative volumes and *Festschriften*, have appeared, and translations, such as that of the *Prolegomena* into Roumanian. Philosophical journals, in France as elsewhere, have devoted special numbers or sections to appraisals or attempts at the further development of the Kantian doctrines. Reich's *Philosophischer Almanach* for 1924 is dedicated to the memory of Kant and contains considerable material, hitherto somewhat inaccessible, on the characteristics of his personality and thought. The International Congress of Philosophy which convened in Naples during the early part of May included as a special feature an address commemorating Kant. Thus, as respects both their number and their importance, the celebrations called forth by the bicentenary of Kant's birth have been exceptional. And is it not indeed more appropriate, particularly in the case of a great philosopher like Kant, to single out for especial commemoration the anniversary of the birth in preference to that of the death? Is not the life of Kant, as of every great philosopher, represented in a peculiar sense and measure by and in his thought? Must we not then say that wherever this is potent and so long as it remains vital there and then do we find present and living the spirit whom we wish to honor?

When our program was arranged my topic was set down as "The Legacy of Kant." At the time, this gave promise of affording an altogether satisfactory caption for such general remarks as might be appropriate in opening our celebration. But the wording of the title is after all not an altogether happy one. In the case of Kant, philosophical endeavor expressed primarily a passion for truth. Herein, and not in an impelling desire to leave a bequest, must one find his central motivation. In his earlier years,

he was an intellectual aristocrat. The crowning glory of man he found in the pursuit of pure science and of philosophy. This Hellenic outlook, to be sure, was abandoned after 1762 when, under the influence of Rousseau—whose picture was the only one to hang in Kant's study during all of his years in the *Prinzessinstrasse*—he learned, as he put it, to "honor men" and to see that he would be less useful than the common laborer unless he dedicated all his powers "to restore the rights of man." Nevertheless Kant even thereafter stands out in sharpest contrast with those who, like so many today, pursue and justify philosophy essentially, if not exclusively, as an agency for social reform. Neither as to problem nor as to method could this be the objective of the critical or the transcendental philosophy.

But it was primarily the queries which arose a moment ago that suggested our comment on the wording of our title. The term "legacy" implies the death of the one from whom the objects of value are derived. Yet, if we would echo Mark Twain, of whom in the entire roster of philosophers could one say more safely than of Kant that the reports of his death are greatly exaggerated? Calling to mind the number of those who acquire and develop philosophic minds by contact with him, the number who state their doctrines by reference to problems and distinctions of his formulation, or who live in and through controversy with him; and noting the number whether of publications or of lectures and courses of study aroused by him, are we not moved to ask: Who is today more vigorously alive—indeed, speaking generally, who during the entire period since 1781 has been more vigorously alive—than Immanuel Kant?

These reflections conjure up vivid memories of the deeply impressive celebration with which the *Albertus-Universitaet* and Koenigsberg paid homage, last April, to





MONUMENT OVER KANT'S GRAVE  
(Dedicated April 21, 1924)



the greatest among those who have as yet appeared in their midst.<sup>1</sup> Outstanding is the memory of the morning during which there was dedicated the newly erected chapel over Kant's grave. The day was cold and dark, with penetrating gusts of wind and driving showers. But one who approached the *Dom* where the exercises were to begin found the thoroughfares thronged with people. Further along, the streets were roped off; thus alone, and by the presence of guards at the portals of the *Dom*, could the invited guests have gained unobstructed access to their appointed places. The tense, solemn expectancy of the crowd through which one passed; the impressiveness of the magnificent Gothic interior, in candle illumination; the subdued spirit and formality that prevailed; a consciousness of the unique character of the occasion; the measured march, in full academic costume and regalia, of the student groups, faculty, rectors of universities, and officials of Königsberg, Prussia, and Germany proceeding, with organ accompaniment, down the main aisle to positions and seats to the rear of and flanking the rostrum, where as the orators of the morning there were the venerable educator, Dr. Stettiner, and Adolf von Harnack, Europe's most distinguished scholar in the historical fields of theology—all so reinforced the impressions surviving from the two preceding days as to yield an experience of ultimate reality—an experience such as is evoked, very commonly, by the contemplation or presence of death. So one felt strongly as though at a funeral. With fluctuating degrees of intensity, however, came also the realization that Kant's funeral was a matter of the long distant past, that it had occurred with similarly impressive exercises and unusual demonstrations of popular regard over a century ago, and that it was the second burial chapel that was presently

<sup>1</sup> A somewhat detailed account of this celebration may be found in a paper, by the present writer, on "The Kantfeier in Königsberg," *The Philosophical Review*, XXXIII, No. 5, pp. 433-449.

to be dedicated. Yet, still again, one experienced, at times even predominantly, a haunting sense of the time-transcending character of the critical philosopher. Had not Professor Hans Vaihinger only the day before insisted that the spirit of Kant's philosophy is ever young and that in one way or another it manifests itself in all the significant philosophical movements in the Germany of today? One by one the numerous divergent types of thought were examined. The Kantian source of voluntaristic systems seemed obvious, as also that of the value philosophies of Windelband, Rickert and Münsterberg. The influential *Als-Ob* philosophers, with their new organ, the *Annalen der Philosophie*, and their valuable studies particularly in the philosophy of religion as well as in logic, but develop certain Kantian strains of thought, more especially various fruitful conceptions included in the discussion of the transcendental ideas and of the implications of the moral experience. Eucken and his followers draw heavily upon Kant, as do even more directly Cohen, Natorp, Cassirer, Görland, and the entire Marburger school. The efforts of Dilthey and, more recently, of Spranger, to establish the number and the nature of the fundamental types of philosophy grounded in the nature of man simply continue the work of Kant, who declared these to be three in number, namely, dogmatism, scepticism and criticism. Troeltsch's metaphysics of religion and history, Vaihinger had argued, Stern's personalistic philosophy, Driesch's neo-vitalism, Husserl's and Scheler's phenomenism, and even the more subtle formulations of recent spiritualism—do not these exhaust the remaining philosophic movements today current in Germany, and can it be doubted that in one respect or another they all exhibit the powerful impact of Kant?

Could a similar thesis be maintained with respect to other countries? Surely not so easily. And yet, let us



note what Ruggiero has said: "The characteristic feature of contemporary French philosophy is its orientation, partly conscious, partly unconscious, toward the Hegelian idealism. Traces of Hegelianism are to be found in Boirac; Lachelier is a Hegelian, and Weber has arrived at his absolute positivism through the Hegelian philosophy. The anti-intellectualistic motive of the philosophy of intuition and its conception of reality as act, as creation, are all Hegelian elements. . . . Blondel's Hegelianism is manifest and, indeed, the immanentism of the modernists . . . and Loisy's conception of history also reveal the same origin."<sup>2</sup> In making these statements Ruggiero refers to the problem and doctrine of Hegel and explicitly disavows implying anything with respect to historical sources; moreover, not all influences emanating from Hegel are to be traced back more ultimately to Kant. Even so, however, the fertility of the latter remains amazing, especially when we recall Renouvier and French phenomenism or neo-criticism; Lachelier, referred to by Ruggiero as the "most distinguished representative of the Kantian movement in France—who stands out as the most profoundly speculative mind of modern French Philosophy";<sup>3</sup> Noel, Berthelot, Liard, Evellin and Brunschvieg, discussed by Ruggiero under the heading, "The Kantians." A similar impression of Kant's influence is gained when one observes the very numerous references to him in such outstanding books as Bergson's *Evolution Créatrice*. Even more directly does Italian philosophy exemplify the living power of Kant's works: Del Vecchio and the neo-Kantians in epistemology, Croce, Gentile and the school of new idealism at once come to mind. In England, the Rhine—or should one not say the Pregel?—began to flow into the Thames with the translations and essays of Coleridge and of Carlyle, and, more philosophically, with the contributions of Ferrier,

<sup>2</sup> *Modern Philosophy*, English edition, p. 224.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

Stirling, Green, Wallace, Nettleship, Edward and John Caird and many others. The dominance of Kantian strains of thought soon became almost exclusive. And those who now contest it by no means all declare their independence from Kant; their Kantian heritage too has been considerable though from somewhat different elements of doctrine. And so, Mr. Laird, a spokesman from the realistic camp, has recently said: "If we could visit the great ones in Valhalla, we should all, I suppose, seek Kant first among the moderns, and present our humble duty to the little, peerless, *spieszbürgerlich* iconoclast from Königsberg; yet we should honor him chiefly for the incomparable fertility of his genius, and most lesser philosophers, so far as I know, are eager to indicate their dissent from much that he says." <sup>4</sup> And may not similar things be said of our own land and of Canada? Who that concerns himself with the kinships of pragmatism, and particularly of instrumentalism, and considers the various wings of idealism, from the more extreme pluralisms and personalisms of Howison on the Pacific and Bowne on the Atlantic to the monisms, whether of the dominantly voluntaristic sort of Royce, the more aesthetically and mystically toned varieties of Baldwin and of Hocking, or the more intellectualistic types of Creighton and of Watson; who that recalls what, by way of reaction, led to our divergent realisms; who that inquires into the influences reflected either by our various philosophical periodicals, from the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* down, or by the men who have stimulated and directed philosophical thought in the class rooms and seminars of our colleges and universities—who, with this before his mind, would flout the assertion that, during the decades during which we have been living, no philosophic thinker has exercised a more widespread or vital power in America than has Immanuel Kant? Now and then, to

<sup>4</sup> *Contemporary British Philosophy: Personal Statements*, edited by J. H. Muirhead, pp. 223f.

be sure, one has heard a stray voice proclaiming that the path to significant philosophy leads not through but around Kant. With his characteristic independence, William James has so contended. Hence it is not impertinent to point out that James' own debt to Kant was very considerable. Let him who seeks the evidence consider the influence upon James of the neo-Kantian Renouvier or trace back the contentions of James with respect to voluntarism and the "will to believe"; and let him note also that simply in the course of a commentary on Kant such a writer as Kemp Smith is impelled more than once to call attention to points in James that carry over or develop Kantian ideas.

That course of responses and experiences which is ordinarily called the life of a man covered in the case of Kant somewhat less than eighty years, and these were of a sort ordinarily regarded as decidedly uneventful. This life, however, projected itself into objective spirit, into a philosophy which has remained perpetually young and fruitful, a source of stimulus and suggestion, continuing today, as throughout the past century and a half, to generate master minds. If, then, we would use the term "legacy" in reference to Kant, we should avoid conceiving this as consisting of deeds and thoughts that have their brief day and then succumb the victims of history and of time. Kant's legacy—and this is a thesis which we wish particularly to stress—is a living, a perpetually dynamic legacy. Kant indeed figures prominently in any purely historical portrayal of human philosophizing; no one laying claim to historical erudition dare remain ignorant of him. Moreover, he belongs in that still more select group comprising those by whose achievements mankind has been lifted to perceptibly higher levels of outlook and practice and to nobler appreciations and aspirations. But even more than this may be claimed. Kant must be counted not merely among the leading figures of the eighteenth century and among

those through whose leadership mankind has taken a distinct step forward; he assuredly belongs also to that company of immortals who have created literature and art, religions, philosophies, or other spiritual productions such that, whatever the course of progress and whatever the changes and wrecks of time, generation after generation constantly find in them that which clarifies and extends vision, gives impetus to more sustained endeavor, and is productive of novel insights and fresh creation.

This living, generative power of Kant's thought, manifest, as we have thus noticed in our own day, expressed itself no less strongly in the past. In 1865 there appeared a book, *Kant und die Epigonen*, in which the author, Otto Liebmann, concludes each chapter save one with the contention, "*Also muss auf Kant zurückgegangen werden.*" Liebmann was as convinced as was Weisse that if philosophy wished to go forward it must go back to Kant. The period was one of philosophical sterility, comparatively speaking, pretty much throughout the western world. Comte, it is true, had only just finished his brilliant work and his ideas were still bearing fruit, especially under the nurture of his French disciple, Littré. Yet that which the Comtean positivism held in promise for general philosophy was far from reassuring. In England, Mill had a short time previously published his *Logic*, but this also, while indubitably a solid achievement, could scarcely be expected to inaugurate a new golden age in philosophy. Spencer, at the time of Liebmann's book, was only beginning to develop his system. So the most stimulating ideas manifest in English thought were, as in the case of France, Kantian in their ultimate source. It was Germany that Liebmann himself had in mind. Here the enthusiasm at the outset aroused by the elaborate constructions erected by Hegel, Schopenhauer and Herbart on Kantian bases had given away to hostility, or, worse still, to indifference toward philosophy



generally. Concentrated intellectual effort became a monopoly of the empirical sciences and of minute investigation. In philosophy, anarchy prevailed. Schelling, Hegel, Herbart, and Schopenhauer all had scattered disciples and there were numerous eclectics and proponents of inconsequential speculative systems. There were also the so-called Real-Idealists who "distilled a philosophical theism out of the pantheism of greater thinkers"; and, in glaring contrast to them, the materialists and the monists who uncritically derived from the doctrines of biological evolution and other scientific discoveries confused and shallow systems of epistemology and metaphysics. Then there came that growing sense of need for philosophical recovery which almost inevitably, one is inclined to say, crystallized itself in the slogan, *Back to Kant*. This was the state of affairs at the time of the Kantian centenary of 1881. The return to Kant was made. And what appeared? It was this: The return to Kant means a return not to the security and authority of a dogmatic system nor to the benumbing atmosphere of scepticism; it is a return not to a place of rest but to a point of fresh departure, affording promising suggestions and stimulus for renewed philosophic exploration. In quick succession there arose numerous philosophic movements which, though widely divergent in many of their features, were alike in the enjoyment of vigorous independent life. Twenty-three years after the centenary of 1881 came the one of 1904, and within this short space of time, the cry *Zurück zu Kant* gave way to the slogan *Von Kant aus, über Kant hinaus*. What more convincing proof can be offered of the supreme importance of the Kantian philosophy than the fact that a return to it thus led to fresh advances from and beyond it? The warmest admirers of Kant, therefore, need take no offence but should rather feel pride in the oft-echoed phrase, *Kant verstehen heisst über Ihn hinausgehen*.

And was not the generative power of the critical philosophy peculiarly manifest at its first appearance? This occurred at a time when the empirical sciences had not as yet developed the technique and the content of which they may now boast. In consequence, they did not enjoy the same prestige either academically or in the wider world. First principles, that is, philosophy, was a required study in Germany, whether students were registered for work in science, theology or law. Moreover, the educated middle class was already fairly large in Germany, and their interests likewise included philosophy, even though their attainments commonly extended no further than the bandying about of phrases.<sup>5</sup> Thus metaphysics possessed a certain vogue. Nevertheless it had already, as we read in the preface to the first *Critique*, been dethroned from its royal place among the sciences. Moreover, while numerous philosophical tendencies were current, none enjoyed competent sponsorship or enthusiastically convinced followers. Along with scholasticism, both Catholic and Protestant, the rationalism of Wolff was in the ascendancy, yet Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and La Mettrie were already making themselves felt. Hume's *Inquiry Concerning the Human Understanding* was rendered into German as early as 1775 and almost immediately its sceptical influence began to spread. Psychological interests were stirred by the works of Condillac and by the translations, appearing one by one, of Bonnet and Batteux, of Hutcheson, Burke, and Home. Here and there, a Spinozistic voice was raised. In many cases the need for a unitary view of the world was stilled by a superficial eclecticism. There was indeed an earnest desire for an intellectually commanding meta-

<sup>5</sup> See the detailed and illuminating account of the philosophical journals, and the organs for philosophical articles, in the Germany of the period from the eighteenth century to the present in *Reichs Philosophischer Almanach* for 1924, pp. 302-462. "Denn noch war die ganze Nation, soweit sie Bildung besaß, ihren Denkern zu folgen imstande, so daß diese es sich leisten konnten, vor ein größeres Publikum zu treten. Kant und Fichte haben es so gemacht" (p. 310).



physics yet there was increasing despair over the possibility of achieving one. Here is the picture as Kant paints it: "At present," he writes, "it is the fashion to despise Metaphysic. After everything has been tried, so they say, and tried in vain, there reign in philosophy weariness and complete indifferentism, the mother of chaos and night in all sciences but, at the same time, the spring or, at least, the prelude of their near reform and of a new light, after an ill-applied study has rendered them dark, confused, and useless."<sup>6</sup> Then it was that the *Critique* appeared. Immediately it gripped the imagination of scholars, and ere long it swept from one end of the land to the other. In 1785, it was espoused by the *Allegemine Literaturzeitung* of Jena; by 1793, it was possible to collate a bibliography of over two hundred titles relating to it. Even before this latter date, it had passed to the lips of the fashionable and leisured, and copies of the book lay on the tables of drawing rooms. To suggest a concrete picture of what occurred one might refer to the universal excitement aroused in our own day by Bergson and Einstein—the feverish activity among scholars, the popularized expositions and the encomiums in the magazine literature, and the clamor in the press and among the non-understanding public. Of course, the critical philosophy was not without opposition. In Hessen, it was forbidden to lecture on Kant, and in Heidelberg a professor was dismissed for venturing to discuss his doctrine, the charge being that Kant was a pure Spinozist and atheist. Many, on the other hand, were carried into such transports by the philosophy that the latter assumed to them a genuinely religious significance. Thus Fernow wrote: "God spake: Let there be light; and there came—the Kantian philosophy." Baggesen, a friend of Wieland's went so far as to call Kant a second Messiah. And it was to Kant himself that Stilling wrote thus, in a

<sup>6</sup> *Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. by F. Max Müller, p. xix.

letter dated March 1, 1789: "You are a great, a very great instrument in the hand of God. I do not flatter—but your philosophy will work a far greater, far more general, and far more blessed revolution than Luther's Reform. As soon as one has well comprehended the *Critique of Reason*, one sees that no refutation of it is possible. Your philosophy must therefore be eternal and unchangeable, and its beneficent effects will bring back the religion of Jesus to its original purity, when its only purpose was holiness."<sup>7</sup> From the side of literary men, one recalls Jean Paul Richter's characterization of Kant as not only a light of the world but as a whole solar system in one, and Goethe's similar, though naturally more restrained expression, that on reading Kant one feels like stepping into a lighted room. Hölderlin, in a letter to his brother, writes: "Kant is the Moses of our nation, who is leading it from Egyptian stagnation into the free, lonely desert of his speculation and brings the dynamic law from the holy mount." The poet-philosopher, Schiller, who would never have been the Schiller that he was except for the influence of Kant, said: "The fundamental ideas of Kant's ideal philosophy will remain a treasure forever, and for their sake alone we ought to be grateful to have been born in this age." Not otherwise was the experience and the testimony of the more technical philosophers. Schopenhauer calls the *Critique* "the highest achievement of human reflection"; and the aged Schelling in a reminiscent mood refers to the splendid time when "through the work of Kant and Fichte the liberated human spirit recognized itself in antithesis to all being as enjoying real freedom and felt justified in asking, not "what is" but "what *may* be," and when at the same time Goethe

<sup>7</sup> *Kant's Schriften*, edition of the Prussian Academy of Sciences, XI, p. 8f. Quoted by F. Max Müller in *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, p. lix. In the section of his preface from which this quotation is drawn, Max Müller cites numerous quotations of a similar sort. One of them we have used in the above paragraph, though we are greatly indebted also to Kroner's recent volume, *Von Kant Bis Hegel*, pp. 1-4, and to Külpe's *Immanuel Kant*, Chap. I.

stood forth as the high example of artistic perfection." Let these quotations and these names transport our imaginations back into that period of almost unprecedentedly tense and confident expectation, eager inquiry, bold construction, and vivid conviction that a new era of philosophy and human culture had begun. In contrast with the philosophical somnolence and confusion just prior to 1781, this immediately subsequent period was so athrob with life and anticipation that it has reminded one of its most recent students, Richard Kroner, of the eschatological hopes at the time when Christianity had its rise. The primary power involved was, of course, the sage of Koenigsberg. Truly of him must it be said that he created a philosophy that is itself creative. Thus alone do we give adequate recognition to the *sort* of legacy that Kant has bequeathed unto mankind.

By virtue of what qualities is the Kantian philosophy so fruitful? In the first place because it is replete with flashes of suggestion and imagination. Mr. Bax has even ventured to maintain that "there is scarcely a doctrine or portion of modern science or controversy, the germ of which is not to be found in Kant hazarded, it may be, in the form of a mere idle fancy, but unmistakably there." Kant, he continues, "was a Titan alike in the range and depth of his knowledge, as in his almost unequalled and certainly unsurpassed intellectual grasp. The only other thinker in the world's history who can be deemed worthy of a place beside him for this all but unique combination of qualities is perhaps Aristotle."<sup>8</sup>

The critical philosophy is fruitful also because it struggles hard to discern and to give full recognition to the elements of truth in all the various tendencies of its day, however opposed these might be to one another or to Kant's own attitudes. More clearly, in many cases, than their fol-

<sup>8</sup> Introductory essay to his translation of Kant's *Prolegomena* (Bohn's Philosophical Library), p. lxxi.

lowers did Kant understand their points of strength, and more certainly than their opponents, their fundamental defects. This acumen, exercised by one as judicious as he was subtle, makes the Kantian critiques peculiarly rewarding to every earnest student.

Furthermore, it is important to note that, in the case of Kant, a fact that challenges interest at once becomes a problem regarding basic principles. To cite a single illustration: *Metaphysics*, though long and ardently pursued, was lacking in the steady progress and the assured results achieved by even the younger empirical sciences. To philosophers generally, this was a fact arousing comment, humor or derision, or disappointment, as the case may be, or, perhaps, even debate as to whether it really after all was a fact. To Kant, it generated a problem, and mankind was enriched by one of the most significant books that have come out of modern Europe. And so in association with Kant we turn from petty worries, disappointments and delights, or from vain disputes, to a whole-souled search for the meaning and validity of principles. Thus do we win wider horizons; thus, in reading Kant, do we come to feel, as did Goethe, that we are stepping into a lighted room.

We may find a fourth reason for the peculiarly stirring and generative quality of Kant's writings in the nature of the issues with which they so forcefully wrestle. One of the constant drives of his thinking, for example, was a question that has since become central in popular thinking no less than in philosophic debate. This question, which he was the first to make pivotal and to formulate in a fruitful fashion, is no other than that as to whether human freedom, and all that it holds in stake, can be rescued in the face of the presuppositions, approved methods, and tested conclusions of the natural sciences. Moreover, in view of the indubitable fact that the human individual be-



longs to the world which such sciences describe and subject to causal determination, can one predicate any unique or intrinsic value to man, or can one rationally believe in his survival after death? Indeed, more generally, what of purpose remains in the world, and what is the relation of values to the order of fact? Can unreserved commitment to the aims and established conclusions of the natural sciences, on the one hand, or unqualified acceptance of the autonomy of the moral individual, on the other, exist in company with a belief in God? Is it strange that a profound mind whose earnest spirit was nurtured under pietistic influences and whose study of the natural sciences was amazingly thorough should formulate and discuss these ultimate issues in a manner perpetually suggestive to inquiring minds? The commemorative tablet affixed to the wall of the castle in Koenigsberg appropriately selects a single quotation from Kant: "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and reverence, the more often and the longer one reflects upon them: the starry heaven above me and the moral law within." To one who thoroughly understood the nature of the revolution wrought by his countryman, Copernicus, and who advanced the nebular hypothesis long before it was independently developed by LaPlace, what may have been the reflections aroused by the starry heavens in so far as these have any connection with the moral law within? May they not have been these: How incidental and insignificant are not man and his terrestrial abode; how lost in the vast expanses of space and how flitting in the perspective of cosmic aeons? Or, in words that Kant well knew, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" To this the voice of the moral law unhesitatingly and confidently makes reply: "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and honor." It is because he took with bitter seriousness both propositions of the

antinomy, and brought to bear upon them all the powers of a great mind that Kant's writings live and create life.

They do this, in the fifth place, because, by their very quality, as by their obvious doctrinal tendencies, they rouse men to self-activity. They hold, as did Goethe, that *Am Anfang war die Tat*. Analytic and critical in method, they stress the spontaneity of reason in the knowledge process, and teach that it is only through its activity that we have an ordered world of experience. Mind, they insist, exists only as active. The essence, too, of their ethical doctrines, and the keynote to their teachings as a whole, is freedom, autonomy, self-determination, heroic faith.

And now, in further explanation of the creative quality of the critical philosophy, should we refer also to the specific doctrines central or peculiar to them? This query invites us into debatable fields but time prevents us from even entering them. Let each seek an answer for himself after hearing the various speakers on our program present the outlines of Kant's teaching in the several departments of his investigation. It seems only fair to say, however, that Kant's methods and principles, and the conclusions which they yield, have not been unassailed, and that few thinkers, if any, would declare them unassailable. It is extremely difficult to determine precisely what Kant as a matter of historical fact either taught or meant to teach, and in how far it may or may not be true of him that the letter killeth but the spirit maketh alive. We must not forget that Kant more than once sharply rebuked the practice of departing from the letter of doctrines and seizing upon and developing what is alleged to be their spirit.<sup>9</sup> But in the letter of Kant's writings there is scarcely an important point with respect to which variant, if not even mutually incompatible, statements may not be collated. In addition, there is the formidable task of adjudicating the

<sup>9</sup> *Kant's Schriften*, edition of the Prussian Academy of Sciences, XII pp. 393f., 397.



relative emphasis belonging to the various elements of the complex system. Here, ripened individual judgment alone, and no universally accepted conclusion, seems possible. So commentators of Kant are to this day in deadlock, and bitter struggles continue as to which philosopher or type of philosophy represents Kant's legitimate heir.<sup>10</sup> Adickes has recently inaugurated an attempt to put an end to this state of affairs; through widespread intellectual co-operation, it is proposed to establish authoritatively just what were the Kantian teachings. But it is very doubtful whether the attempt is not misconceived in its aims, and whether it could possibly succeed in fact. The reason lies in part—though in part alone—in the abundant wealth and comprehensiveness of thought in the Kantian writings, and in their desire to render to every tendency and element its full and just claims in every context. And this too underlies the perpetual fruitfulness of Kant's work.

The critical philosophy is in a peculiar degree a mirror of Kant himself. In commemorating him, we bring before ourselves a person of unmistakable individuality. His life was exceptionally ordered and unified and was yet responsive to the appeals of nature and to all things human as well. His personality at once charms us by its simplicity and astonishes us by its richness and diversity, no less than by its force. His character exhibits integrity, self-discipline, singleness of aim; yet it is without narrowness or self-seeking, without harshness or hardness. As few others, he was imbued with a sense of the intrinsic value of truth; the annals of philosophy tell of no one who devoted his life more exclusively, more earnestly, more open-mindedly or painstakingly than he in its quest. Linked with this

<sup>10</sup> In his own day, Kant was urged publicly to announce which of his expositors understood him as he wished to be understood. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 390, 393. An admirable discussion of various explanations that have been advanced to account for the differences between interpretations of Kant may be found in Max Frischeisen-Köhler's recent essay, "Probleme und Aufgaben der Kant-Forschung," *Reichs Philosophischer Almanach* for 1924, p. 46ff.

keen theoretic interest, however, was an unwavering respect for the dignity and authority of the moral life. It is a revelation of himself, and not mere phrases, that Kant gives in his eloquent apostrophe to duty: "*Duty!* Thou sublime and mighty name that dost embrace nothing charming or insinuating, but requirest submission, and yet seekest not to move the will by threatening aught that would arouse natural aversion or terror, but merely holdest forth a law which of itself finds entrance into the mind, and yet gains reluctant reverence (though not always obedience), a law before which all inclinations are dumb, even though they secretly counter-work it; what origin is there worthy of thee, and where is to be found the root of thy noble descent which proudly rejects all kindred with the inclinations; a root to be derived from which is the indispensable condition of the only worth which men can give themselves?"<sup>11</sup> But it was this same exacting self-critical thinker and this reverentially dutiful spirit who, impressed by the imperishable element in Rousseau, declared that without enthusiasm nothing great has ever been accomplished. To the complacent optimism of current rationalism and Leibniz's description of this as the best of all possible worlds, Kant was unable to subscribe. For this he was too conscious of the havoc caused by nature and of the "radically evil" in man; for this he was too delicately sensitive to the inequalities in the social system. As regards his judgment of man and society as they are, Kant must be classed as a pessimist. Yet his spirit was too virile to accept existing conditions as final. Intimately bound up with the performance of duty, he both realized and taught, is faith in the possibility of human perfectibility. For him, therefore, such faith was itself a moral requirement. Kant's attitude and teaching, then, were neither optimistic nor pessimistic; nor were they precisely what is today de-

<sup>11</sup> *Critique of Practical Reasons*, tr. by Abbott, p. 180.

scribed as melioristic. They were *heroistic*. It was an earlier compatriot of his—a man with whose name that of Kant is often joined—who dared follow the call of duty and set forth for Worms even though the devils there might be found to be as numerous as the shingles on the houses. Let this incident suggest the nature of that basic attitude toward life which we have called heroistic. Kant, the *Alleszermalmer*, had demolished, as he believed, the classic arguments for the existence of God; had demonstrated the impossibility of knowledge transcending the objects of the space-time world, and the universality within this world of causal determination. Nevertheless, with invincible, heroic faith he identified his deepest being with the moral self and founded a kingdom of the spirit on the categorical dictates of the practical reason.

Kant's urbanity, delight in social intercourse, and appreciation of friends are given special prominence in the commemorative exercises annually held by an organization in Königsberg called "Society of the Friends of Kant." On every 22nd of April since Kant's death on February 12, 1804, a group, now grown to a membership of about one hundred, has held a commemorative meal. Since 1812 this has gone by the name of *Bohnenmahl*. For it is the custom to bury a bean in an immense cake, a piece of which, in the course of the meal, is received by each of the members. The person securing the piece containing the bean is declared the *Bohnenkoenig*. With two ministers of his selection he rules over the exercises of the ensuing year and from him there is on that occasion expected an address on some topic relating to Kant. In its whimsicalities, its fine fellowship, its introduction of the lighter veins of conversation in the midst of, or more generally, prior to serious discussion, the *Bohnenmahl* aims to reproduce the meals to which Kant daily invited a number of his friends, representing men from various lines of professional and

business activity and from various nationalities.

Cosmopolitan in his interests and sympathies, deeply respectful of the universally human which he found in all types and stations of men, zealous in his devotion to truth, singularly impressed by the claims of duty, cognizant of the power of enthusiasm and of the refining and expanding effects of intercourse between friends and table companions, Kant was withal a self-possessed, integrated and concentrated personality. Fascinating and stimulating, alike in his simplicity and in his astounding multiplicity of interests and capacities, Kant is essentially spirit, and a spirit of rare individuality.

During the pathetic years of his decline, Kant had as his physician a university colleague, who was at the time also rector of the Albertus. On one of the last occasions when the latter went to visit his patient, Kant, though long too feeble to move about securely, arose and refused to take a chair before his physician and colleague was seated, remarking, with a forced concentration of his remaining powers of mind and of speech, "The feeling of humanity has not yet forsaken me." And during the night between the 11th and 12th of February, 1804, he whispered to his faithful friend, Wasianski, his last words: "*Es ist gut.*"

As we consider the legacy bequeathed by Kant to mankind—as we consider his character and the philosophy into which he projected the deepest experiences and reflections of strenuous decades—must not we echo the words, "It is good?" And may we not, with increased conviction, repeat the words with which we began: "It is altogether fitting that we break sufficiently from our accustomed round of lectures and other college activities to unite, during these days, in commemorating the life and work of Immanuel Kant."

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THE NEED AND POSSIBILITY OF AN IMPERATIVISTIC ETHIC

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## THE NEED AND POSSIBILITY OF AN IMPERATIVISTIC ETHIC

IT WILL be the purpose of this paper to show that an imperativistic ethics, such as that of Kant, is more conducive to social morale and the health of society than other systems of ethics, such as those of hedonism or self-realization. On the other hand, the trend in modern ethics has for a hundred years been consistently away from imperativistic ethics and in the direction of self-realization and hedonistic systems. We are thus faced by a kind of dilemma and we have to inquire whether there is any way out of it. Presently, we must ask whether there are not some signs in very recent philosophical movements of a return to an imperativistic ethics.

Kant's ethical system has a certain sublimity which has made a powerful popular appeal through all the time since he wrote. Its superlative emphasis upon freedom; its noble exaltation of duty, which evermore says simply, "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not"; its doctrine of a categorical imperative which disdains to speak of reasons; its teaching that the motive of moral action is found in mere respect for the moral law without consideration of consequences; its belief that our knowledge of moral law comes not through experience but through intuition; and finally its three famous formulae, which in all specific cases guide us unerringly to a proper course of conduct—all these have tended to awaken respect and admiration for the Kantian

ethics. As a system it may be logically defective at each stage, but in practice it works. Pragmatically it justifies itself.

But under the scrutiny of the reflective thought of the present, any *a priori*, absolutist, or imperativistic moral system fares badly. During the nineteenth century the increasing insurgency of evolutionary naturalism turned us quite away from the *a priori*, imperativistic systems, naturalism claiming to know nothing of a categorical imperative, nothing of the autonomy of the will—nor even of any will at all except as a general name for “activities of control”—nothing of an absolute duty which has to render no reasons for itself, nothing of principles of morals given *a priori*, nothing of a freedom which is independent of the laws of nature. It looked with deepest suspicion upon a metaphysics of morals which should be “free from all admixture of empirical psychology, physics, and hyperphysics.” It ridiculed the notion that the knowledge of moral action must be mere respect for the moral law itself, as if the latter were something to be adored with quaking fear. It made merry over the doctrine that an action loses its moral quality when inclination leads that way and likewise over the assertion that the moral character of an action is independent of its consequences. It claimed to find Kant guilty of a childish fallacy when he put forward as the content of the moral law the principle that we should always act in such a way that we can will that the maxim of our action should become a universal law, since one would never propose such a principle unless he had a reason for it—such for instance as the welfare of society. And finally, it found altogether incomprehensible the notion of a noumenal world whose laws of action are not the same as the laws of nature in our present environment.

It was claimed that Kant was not at his best in his ethical writings, that while his dialectical skill as shown in his

*Critique of Pure Reason* was well-nigh superhuman, his ethical writings were the works of his later years, when the fire of his intellect was somewhat dimmed and the first feeling of fatigue was causing him to sink back into the everlasting arms of reverence and duty. By birth, by early training, by national culture, he belonged to the disciplined souls, those who never fail in obeisance to duty, to conscience, and to morality. In his *Metaphysics of Ethics* and in his *Practical Reason*, the pietism of Kant's youth was coming to expression. His *Critique of Pure Reason* was the work of his intellectual prime; it was the expression of his forebrain and hemispheres. *The Critique of Practical Reason* was the work of his early decline; it was the expression of his thalamus and his endocrine glands. It was claimed also that the influence of Rousseau had drawn Kant away from the strict logical and metaphysical studies, where his genius showed itself most profound, into the by-paths of humanism.

No doubt, all these criticisms of the Kantian ethics have some force, but they impress us less than formerly. The dogmatic spirit of evolutionary naturalism is not now in harmony with the mood of inquiry encouraged by recent studies in philosophy. Nor has it been strengthened by the so-called new physics, nor by the theory of relativity, nor by the partial failure of that particular form of evolution known as Darwinism.

Not quite the same, however, can be said concerning the difficulties in the Kantian ethics arising from the newer genetic, psychological, historical, and social studies which were not available in Kant's time. These surely have thrown great light on the theoretical problems of morals.

The powerful influence of group life in shaping man's moral nature was not fully appreciated by the author of the *Practical Reason*, or at any rate not congenial to his

mood when he was working out his ethical theories. Our modern views have been shaped in accordance with these views. We use a different set of categories now. We speak of social instincts, social welfare, social customs, social pressure, the ridicule and approval of the group, social co-operation furthered by work and play, by primitive song and dance, and by primitive art. We find the roots of our moral lives in forces that are biological, social, and psychological. We find the social instincts to be the forerunners of moral sentiments and we trace the gradual rise of intelligence, heralding the emergence of mankind into an ethical environment, involving the reflective examination of different ends and the rational choice of one rather than another. We see how moral character arises as a kind of dependability which an individual may come to have as his habitual responses are in the direction of the common social good, rather than in the direction of individual desires. Thus intuition becomes nothing more than the rapid appraisal of the worth of certain kinds of conduct, acquired dexterity of thought in all matters relating to social behavior, gained through constant social contact in group life, where all behavior is good or bad behavior as it accords or does not accord with the customs, traditions, and beliefs as to the supposed conditions of social welfare.

The will, which figured so prominently in Kant's ethics, is mentioned less often in our modern ethics. We speak rather of habits and tendencies and active dispositions; while instead of the pure good will and intention we speak more often of clinical history. We measure the moral quality of actions by their consequences; but we do not overlook the fact that in passing judgment upon the moral character of an individual we are not concerned so much with the consequences of any particular act as with the probable consequences of his future acts. The individual's



clinical history, that is, his character, determines his probable future acts. We soon come to despise the man of good will whose good will is not shown by good deeds, and by good deeds we mean those which have good consequences, and good consequences are those which conduce to successful living in society. So it comes about that *life* is the category upon which modern ethics hinges. Our ethical systems are worked out largely in the sphere of biology and sociology. If we go back to the ants and bees, we find that their behavior, mechanized through the ages in the form of instincts, is quite unerringly directed to one very definite end, namely, the continued life of the species. Advancing to primitive mankind, we find the situation much the same, only that the social instincts are supplemented by customs, contributing, or supposed to be contributing to the welfare of the group. And since individual interests sometimes come into conflict with the social instincts and the tribal customs, there arise social approval and disapproval, ridicule, punishment, fear, reward—and gradually a peculiar sensitiveness on the part of the individual to this social approval or disapproval.

In some such way as this, ethics is studied in recent years, and at first it all seems quite foreign to the Kantian approach. The difference is still further manifest by the place taken in modern thought by reflective morality. Human intelligence arrives on the scene and loosens up the old morality of tradition, pruning away mistaken customs and purifying and perfecting moral codes.

In all this development of ethical theory it is taken for granted that social welfare is the final arbiter of moral laws, until finally human welfare itself is brought into the focus of criticism and resolved into its elements, such elements being usually found in self-realization or the full activity of our powers, though sometimes happiness is still regarded as the final end.



I cannot but think that this general approach to the moral problem is to be approved, and at first it seems quite as much opposed to the Kantian ethics as was evolutionary naturalism. Possibly it makes any return to the standpoint of Kant out of the question. Concerning this I shall inquire presently, but first I wish to discuss another aspect of the problem. I wish to speak of the distinctively imperativistic elements in Kant's system and see if we cannot find at least a kind of pragmatic justification for them.

Some recent writer has called attention to the "frosty chill" that falls upon a class of students in ethics when the self-realization philosophy is explained to them and its logical strength revealed. In the enthusiasm which it excites, it is a bad third to the other theories, Kant's absolutist and intuitive and imperativistic ethics ranking first, and hedonism second. As an illustration of this we may recall the blazing triumph of Fichte, when in the winter of 1808 he preached the gospel of duty and the categorical imperative in his remarkable *Addresses to the German People*. If you say that it was Fichte's eloquence which moved the German people to assert their national rights and shake off the yoke of Napoleon, still, even an orator must have a text, and Fichte had a deep and powerful principle. To some extent the magnificent development of the German people during the hundred years following the death of Kant can be traced to the very gospel of loyalty, devotion, and non-reflective obedience to duty which was the basis of Kant's practical philosophy. James Martineau with his doctrine of the intuitive worth of motives, Josiah Royce with his ethics of loyalty, or even Nietzsche with his gospel of manly strength, make an appeal which Bentham and Mill with their greatest happiness principle or perfectionists with their tables of values can never make.

The social situation which results from adherence to the Kantian imperativistic ethics is what we may call *morale*. It is the condition of discipline in all well-disciplined bodies. It implies instant and unconditional obedience to authority, together with respect for authority. It involves respect for authority, obedience to authority, and respect for and obedience to law—the three things which this age most needs.

In military bodies the categorical imperative is the only thing that will work. Authority says, "Do this" and it is done. Reflective morality has no place here, and military methods get things done. We deplore the Great War and the evils which have sprung from it, but it had some fine lessons. That America could in the space of a few months raise an army of 4,000,000 men, train and equip them, project nearly two million of them across the Atlantic, build great ships and railroad systems, and hurl this army with resistless force upon a distant enemy, seemed to many like a miracle. But it depended upon morale. Officers, soldiers, and sailors did what they were told to do and went where they were sent. We can all remember the alacrity with which we got to our feet seven years ago when the national hymn was sung.

But morale is more than instant obedience to authority. It involves respect for authority. After the signing of the Armistice, there was still obedience to authority in the army, but we recall the absence of morale. The inspiration of a great cause was lacking and with it the necessary respect.

In time of peace there has been a gradual breaking down of social morale throughout the world in our great social organisms. In recent times Italy and Russia have tried desperate methods to regain it, partially failing because of a divided allegiance, gaining indeed a kind of obedience but not universal loyalty. We have here, I suppose, the

great problem of our modern world—how to secure social morale in our enormous states, containing fifty to one hundred million people, in the midst of wealth and luxury, with our mixed and shifting populations, our changing customs, our iconoclastic fiction, and our degenerate stage. Whence is to come that voice of authority, that autonomous will, which is going to make all these people behave themselves? The starry heavens still remain, but the sentiment of duty in the human soul seems to be disappearing. Rights have taken the place of duties. We live in a centrifugal and expansive age, restive of any restraint or control, revealing an almost pathological desire for freedom and for the full and abundant life.

Our whole mode of thought is individualistic, insurgent and romantic. We are restive under the restraints of old traditions and institutions. The loss of confidence, for instance, in our legislative bodies is a case in point. Mr. Gardiner, writing in the *Atlantic Monthly* on "The Twilight of Parliament," says, "The universal loss of faith in men, in institutions, in creeds, in theories, which is the devastating product of the war, has touched nothing, not even the church, more blighting than it has touched parliament." This lack of confidence in our legislative bodies still further weakens our social morale.

The enormous power of religion in the history of peoples in preserving moral standards and insuring social morale has been due to the very principles which underlie the Kantian ethics, namely, faith, devotion, loyalty, and reverence. Here, perhaps, is the key to the whole problem of morals. Devotion of some kind there must be—devotion to the flag, devotion to the church, devotion to conscience, or devotion to the mores of the past.

What is lacking in our modern individualistic centrifugal society is the Kantian spirit of respect for the moral law. There is need of the "inner check," the motive of

restraint and reserve, the discipline of the wise man who looks beyond the present. Such a wise man sees that any stable and happy society must have a centripetal motive. Some authority there must be, commanding our loyalty and respect, acting as an integrating force in an age threatened with social disintegration. Social evolution lies in the direction of a more integrated and disciplined social organism. It is the ethical society, not the wealthy, comfortable, free society which will survive.

It is not at all my purpose in this paper to exalt imperativistic morality in contrast with reflective morality. Progress in morals comes through reflective morality and through the insight of great leaders. It is only that the pendulum in our own day has swung to the extreme, and reflective morality has reached its limit for the time. In Ibsen's *Doll's House* we see reflective morality, wisely perhaps, breaking away from the tyranny of unreasoned conventions, but in Mencken and Cabel and in unnumbered modern novels and plays we see it reaching and passing the limit. If we could strike a balance between reflective and imperativistic morality, we could attain to social progress without danger of social disaster.

Incidentally, it is interesting to notice the intimate connection between social morale and imperativistic ethics. Animal instinct is the foundation of all morality of imperatives. In colonies of bees and ants social morale is nearly perfect. Reflection has not yet dawned and behavior is mechanized and nearly unvarying. The autonomous will is in the nervous mechanism of the animals. Among primitive men social morale again prevails. The customs of the tribe are obeyed. Children do not have to be punished. Young men and women do not have to be greatly admonished. Why? Because in constant intertribal warfare those people in whom internal discipline is not present have perished. The individuals of the group must act together,



else they die. In our great modern nations social morale is found most perfect in time of war, when imperativistic ethics prevails. It is also present among people who are preparing for war or are threatened by war. In time of peace and security it fails, when reflective morality is preached in a flood of magazines and books, especially in books of fiction and on the screen and in the drama.

But, in any social group, morale prevails in the smaller groups where imperativistic morality rules. In football teams it is nearly perfect. Players called from the game sometimes weep—but they obey. “Theirs not to reason why.” Headstrong sons and daughters will not listen to the admonitions of their parents, but readily submit to the discipline of their fraternity or sorority. The rules in a boys’ gang are obeyed, and obeyed not because they are reasonable but because they are rules. They are categorical imperatives. Fashions of all kinds are again categorical imperatives. There is no particular reason why you should not wear your straw hat before a given date but you don’t do it. Our daughters may disobey many of the ten commandments but not the commandment of the short dress and the bobbed hair. When the great steamer, the Titanic, on her maiden voyage westward, struck an iceberg in mid-ocean and went down, the men—statesmen, scholars, artists—helped the women and children into the scanty life-boats and themselves stood calmly on the deck of the sinking ship and died. Why? Just because such conduct is ordained. It is the proper thing to do. It is the morality of imperatives, and it is the morality of imperatives rather than the morality of reflection that seems to bring results.

There emerge from this discussion two truths: first, that discipline is needed; second, discipline comes from precisely the kind of morality which Kant preached. A centrifugal age like the present needs Kant and his morality.



Our world is obsessed by a group of new values, mostly of the centrifugal and expansive variety, very familiar to us, preached as they have been for one hundred and fifty years from every platform and pulpit, and bristling from all our State papers. They are Liberty, Equality, Opportunity, Efficiency, Energy, Democracy, Organization, Science, Invention, and Discovery. We believe in these still—but the time has come in our modern crowded communities when we must focus our attention upon another set of values of the integrating, centripetal variety, such as Respect for Law and Obedience to Law, Limitation of Desires, Temperance, Restraint, Discipline, Co-operation, Conservation of Racial Values and National Resources, and Education, for upon the practice of these virtues the very existence of society depends. The massing of populations in cities, the disappearance of the frontier, and the rapid increase of population in almost all countries make the practice of these integrating virtues absolutely necessary.

But now, of course, in answer to all this you may say that it is true enough that the world needs discipline. It needs an autonomous will; it needs either an angry God with his ten commandments graven on everlasting stone, or else some mighty magnet drawing and commanding the respect and obedience of men. But the world has lost its faith in an angry God and where shall we find the leader who will draw all men unto himself? Shall we turn back to Kant and accept his autonomous will? If it be true that Kant's philosophy of duty and the categorical imperative is precisely the philosophy that a centrifugal age such as ours seems most to need, will this mere fact justify us in accepting the Kantian ethics?

Before I go on to inquire whether in the light of the philosophy of the present we may still believe in the ethics of Kant, let me illustrate still further the need of some

such system. It is complained that in our large cities, there is a serious break-down of moral standards in the relations of high school boys and girls. Indeed, it is not wholly confined to large cities. Conventional morality in Europe since the Great War has suffered a marked decline. There has been in this country a serious break-down in respect to obedience to the laws of the State, noticeable in the high percentage of crime as well as in the flagrant disregard of law in the smuggling and manufacture and sale of intoxicants in violation of our national laws. The perpetuity of our social order will depend upon respect for law, even if it does not depend, as I think it will, upon respect for the purity of the family, and respect for honor and integrity. In the face of a widespread violation of these laws, we do not know what *will* happen; but what *may* happen is gradual social dissolution, with political disorder and bloodshed, with their accompanying poverty and distress, dirt and disease.

Very well, what is the remedy? Education, perhaps you will say. Our young people must be instructed in the hygiene of sex, in the codes of honor, truthfulness, honesty, thrift, and the dignity of labor, and in the supreme importance of obedience to law; and it must be clearly explained to them that unless these virtues are practiced the welfare or even the safety of society will be threatened. However, the best we can do for them by this method will be a hypothetical imperative. *If* you don't do so and so, *then* such and such unhappy things will happen. But I think Kant was right about the hypothetical imperative. People do not really care so very much about consequences, especially if they be far in the future, and affect not themselves but society. I wonder whether we can make people good in this way. Certainly education will do much and the necessity for a moral education could hardly be over-emphasized. But is it not true, as Kant so plainly saw,

that when people do right against their natural impulses, it is usually not from prudence but from loyalty—loyalty to some kind of authority, the authority of conscience, the authority of religion, the authority of habit, the authority of the group, the authority of custom, the authority of public opinion; the authority of fraternity, or union?

One of the most widespread errors of the present time is the belief that our social and ethical problems are to be solved by political and economic reforms. The constructive work of the world at present is devoted to economic reform, not social reform, the assumption being that social evils will cure themselves, if the economic ills are done away. Only give everybody opportunity, leisure, freedom, and their rightful share of the world's wealth and they will at once behave themselves. This fallacy is abroad everywhere, but it is fatal. One might even say that in proportion as our economic problems are solved, our social problems increase. Comforts, luxuries, wealth, leisure and freedom scattered generously among a hundred million people, whose average mental age is less than fourteen years, whose powers of self-control and restraint are uncultivated and who have been educated in a school not of discipline but of self-expression, if not even of self-indulgence and insurgency, contribute not to social stability but to social decadence.

Such, then, it seems to me, is the situation as regards the relation between social morale and imperativistic ethics. Kant's ethical system works in practice—but what about its theory? Are we not faced with this depressing fact that the theory rests upon a whole set of ungrounded assumptions, while our modern evolutionary, biological, and psychological ethics rests upon well-established principles? I believe that such is not the case, but I cannot attempt in the few remaining paragraphs of my paper to vindicate this belief. I can only mention one or two tend-

encies in the philosophy of the present which seem to give promise of a partial return to the Kantian position. And I may say further that I do not look for the vindication of the Kantian ethics in a revival of the older forms of idealism or the absolutist philosophies, but rather in certain trends in the pluralistic, epigenetic, and pragmatic philosophy of the times.

What then are some of the new thoughts which lend encouragement to the principles of the practical reason? I should say, first, the very prevalent tendency to interpret values, and among them moral values, as abiding realities in a universe no longer conceived exclusively in terms of physics and chemistry. No other thought in philosophical modernism is so significant to me as the hope that we may attribute full objective reality to matter and motion without conceding the whole universe to them. They are real, but so are many other things, such as space and time, or space-time, relations, logical principles, life and mind, and ethical and aesthetic values. In the doctrine of the reality of moral values—their absolute reality, if you must use this much abused term—the road is straightway opened for a revival of the Kantian ethics. Goodness is no longer to be interpreted in terms of desire, but desire in terms of the good. There is today, I believe, a very strong reaction against the view of Spinoza that things are good because we desire them, in favor of the view that we desire them because they are good. We are now coming to think that values are real and objective. We have been patient too long with the claim made by the disciples of naturalism that physical and chemical concepts have some sort of prerogative in the world of reality. The world as revealed to us in physics and chemistry is a true world, but not the whole world—nor even a fair sample of the whole world. From the science of ethics we may with equal right select entities which are as real and perhaps more representative



than those of physics. If this be true, ethics again aspires to the place of autonomy given it by Kant. There may be an absolute right, after all, and if so, it will speak with the voice of authority. If moral values are subsistent entities, we shall no longer have hypothetical imperatives exclusively, but categorical ones as well. Goodness and righteousness will no longer be stepping-stones to some more real goal, such as happiness, but ends in themselves, like powerful magnets drawing all things to themselves. They will speak with authority because they are eternal values; and they will command our loyalty and allegiance because of their intrinsic worth, which the soul of man has power to discern. We are beginning to learn that desires are not ultimate or arbitrary states of mind that simply exist and do not have to account for themselves. This autonomy of desire, which has ruled for a time in many current ethical theories was quite as dogmatic as Kant's autonomy of the will. As Mr. Laing says in his recent *Studies in Moral Problems*, "The question of the morality of desire has become an objective one; it turns upon conditions and natural processes, not upon some inner or subjective force or tendency." "Desire," he says, "emerges from or supervenes on processes in which certain things or qualities have already come to have or to be values; and desire does not create that value but presupposes it" (p. 217).

I believe that ethical philosophy will be much simplified if we accept the view that life is a value in itself, and that the conditions of life have come into being because they were indispensable to that end, and that mind and intelligence and consciousness, and social organization are values, for which organic life was indispensable. Likewise righteousness and justice, love and co-operation, conscience and duty, beauty and goodness, are values in themselves and at the same time indispensable conditions of other values. Thus we shall have the autonomy of values,



which will approximate somewhat closely to the Kantian ethics with its exaltation of duty, obedience and reverence.

Such an ethical system will come much nearer to imperativistic than to reflective morality. If, as Kant said, duty is a jewel shining by its own light, we may say that all these values are jewels shining by their own light.

There are many tendencies in the philosophy of the present that seem in harmony with Kant's practical philosophy. In one form or another the notion of a creative evolution in which freedom and spontaneity are expressed in the realization of higher and higher values widely prevails. We are learning that evolution is an epigenetic process, rather than strictly an evolution, successively realizing life and mind and social organization and art, science, and philosophy. We may at least regard these as values, if we are not ready to regard them as goals. And even if they are not to be considered as values, there is at any rate a creative process at work in their appearance. There is, as Bergson thinks, some original aspiration of life, which finds fulfillment only in society. We are emphasizing now the conative tendencies in organisms—impulse, striving, deep springs of action, which well up in our conscious life, suffused with emotional tone, not merely as desires and appetites, but as vague longings, aspirations and hopes, so that they become springs of progress as well as fountains of our love-life, our social life, our economic life. They are the power behind the throne in it all.

And many of us are beginning to believe that the brain and indeed the muscles and bones and digestive organs are instruments of these "energy influences, seething and bubbling in the organism" and that the biological interests themselves are but parts of a universal cosmic force, which is a conative force, a life force, an organizing power, a common creative agency, an internal perfecting principle, an evolutionary urge. It is that primeval Effort which

Hobhouse speaks of as the creator of gods and men. It is that Activity which Lloyd Morgan in his recent work on *Emergent Evolution* says we must posit at the beginning of evolution. It is that *clan vital* which Bergson finds at the source of life; it is the struggle for existence which Darwin used but never explained; it is craving; it is interest; it is hunger; it is aspiration. It is creative; it is spontaneous; it is free; and, dare we say, it is moral. A wholly new set of categories is adopted by Professor Patten, in his *Grand Strategy of Evolution*, in explaining evolution. Egoism, altruism, and service are ultimate conceptions by which alone we can understand evolution. Mechanistic science furnishes us with no picture of a free creative source possessing moral attributes. It would appear that the idea expressed by the word "ought" is not a newcomer in the world, appearing when man first began to speak of duties. On the contrary, it belongs far back at the primeval source of things. Thus it appears that we are speaking after all of Kant's noumenal will, only we are giving it modern names. Professor Starbuck, in a recent paper on the Kantian ethics, expresses the belief that there is no such chasm between the pure and the practical reason as Kant's critics claim; that in all his works, from the beginning, Kant was feeling his way to the doctrine of the primacy of the will. Mr. H. S. Chamberlain in his work on Kant says: "If the categorical imperative would not ring in reason itself, as one of the fundamental facts out of which the Ego and the world arise, then the conception of morality would have no sense."

Possibly then we may arrive at the conception of the universe as moral, as the very expression of moral rather than of physical law. If so, there is still hope for that respect for the moral law and that reverence for duty upon which the salvation of society seems to depend.

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CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF KANT

in reciprocal contacts with which these ideas took form, and thus to add to specific theoretical interpretations the suggestive and corrective illumination of genetic connections. In the accounts of Kant, on the other hand, theoretical analysis preponderates to such a degree that the mental personality of Kant appears not as a genetic character but rather as almost another Ding-an-sich, placed on a cultural island. The terms of his philosophy, severed from most of their connotative relations to general cultural origin and condition, are often reduced to a degree of technical specificity, to a paucity of association and haggard sharpness of lineament, disconcerting to those who require the legitimate tests of non-speculative demonstration. In this formal withdrawnness lies the cause also of the great difficulty experienced by those who, by trying to interrelate the great movements in literature with those in philosophy, endeavor to deepen and enrich the comprehension of the genetic and essential unity of all culture.

The following sketch, summary as it must be, has for its subjects both the more important general factors and the more salient literary expressions of the cultural environment of the philosophy of Kant.

The conclusion of the Thirty Years' War had given the forms of peace to a country for the most part devastated. A whole generation had been destroyed. Vast districts were entirely uninhabited and had fallen back into wilderness. More than one-third of the population had perished. Most of the Baltic and North Sea ports, and the control of the navigation of the Rhine had been taken away by France and Sweden, and thus Germany's foreign trade with the North, East, and West, especially with Russia, Holland, and England, strangled. In the fifteenth century the cities of Germany had been the radiating centers of the main routes of European commerce from the Levant, through the Mediterranean, through Italy, to the





HOUSE IN PRINZESSINSTRASSE WHERE KANT LIVED FROM 1783  
UNTIL HIS DEATH



GARDEN VIEW OF KANT'S HOME IN PRINZESSINSTRASSE



remainder of Europe and to England. Aeneas Sylvius, later Pope Pius II, who had traveled through Germany, has given in his book on Germany a vivid picture of the extraordinary wealth, culture, and greatness of German life. At that time commerce and industry had attained to a stage in which many modern methods of capitalism and organization were anticipated. The great merchant princes and financial leaders had the wide views of statesmen. Wholesale methods of production; associations resembling modern stock companies and often winning the controlling positions of modern trusts; modern systems of credit, of financing vast enterprises; exchanges and trade agreements had been established. The burghers had been wealthy and had some share in the liberal outlook of men of the world, leisure for culture, and the enterprising and optimistic sense of political independence, by which periods of sound prosperity are distinguished.

During the Thirty Years' War all that magnificent structure of civilization had been buried under an avalanche of ruin.

That war had also destroyed the last vestige of imperial control and unity. Pufendorf, the great jurist of the seventeenth century, who, following Grotius, tried to establish a modern international law on the basis of the "natural law" of Rationalism, characterized the empire as "*irregulare aliquod corpus et monstro simile*" (a non-descript body resembling a monster). The empire had been broken up into hundreds of independent states, each ruled over by an irresponsible absolute prince, who aped the forms and extravagance of Louis XIV and kept his subjects impoverished by the taxation required to cover the lavish expense and pomp of his court and army. The importance of the central power enabled these princes to establish without hindrance the principle of the absolute monarchy borrowed from the *Roi Soleil*. The people be-

came subjects; blind obedience, the highest virtue; unquestioning submission to official authority, the only way of safety and happiness. The theory of divine grace and the "*beschränkte Untertanenverstand*" reached its highest development: "*Ruh ist die erste Bürgerpflicht.*" The fibres of independence were shattered, civic responsibility, enterprise, and initiative were pulverized into atomistic subject-isolation and inertia. Not only the burgher and farmer, but the petty nobility as well shared in this fate of civic devitalization and downward leveling. During the Thirty Years' War and after, the knights had lost, through the new methods of warfare brought about by gunpowder, their military prestige, and with the general economic collapse and dislocation of methods of production much of their property. Many had become robbers, vagabonds, or soldiers of fortune; their economic and political power was gone. The only careers open to them were in the army or the bureaucracy, as the retainers of the absolute princes.

The cities had been deprived of their power and wealth. With the barring of the great trade routes through Germany, and with the diversion of commerce to the Atlantic seaboard and England, their foreign trade was dead. Internal trade was paralyzed by the hundreds of obstructions in the forms of taxes and imposts of every conceivable sort, collected at every one of the hundreds of state boundaries, at the gates of towns and cities. Universal stagnation famine prices, and a steady increase in poverty were the result.

All the gain of the fifteenth century in the technique and progress of commerce, industry, and civic culture was lost. The enlightened burgher of that great age had become the timid, petty, anxious, impoverished *Kleinbürger*. There was no vision. The mental horizon of the *Kleinbürger* at the turn of the seventeenth century was bounded by his parish, by what he could descry from the spire of



his church. The mean ethics of a cowed poverty, brow-beaten by an absolutistic and far from incorruptible officialdom, shut off from every avenue of escape to opportunity, pervaded like a fatal plague the civic life.

The intellectual life was barren, and enslaved by rules. The few individual exceptions, of which one is of supreme, and two are of eminent, importance, appear as miracles. Bach, probably the greatest musician of all history, and Händel, founded modern music; and Leibniz introduced the conception of the dynamic individual as the primary factor of reality, into philosophy. In literature, there was one poet of original talent, Günther, who by his inability to adjust himself to the conditions of conventional existence, succumbed to a disordered life. Opitz and Gottsched, the two leading literary men, the one of the seventeenth, the other of the eighteenth century, were dominated by the formal rationalism of the French classic period, which in its insistence on the universality of its rules, on the subordination of individual impulse to an aesthetic code, on submission of spontaneous emotion to the criteria of objective truth and form, was the aesthetic pendant of political absolutism. French classicism, however, with all its formalism and intellectual pedantry, had been at least vitalized by a great efflorescence of national genius. It was a true historical expression of national genius. But the theory and practice of Opitz and Gottsched had no deep roots in national life. They were alien incrustations hiding and suffocating the true nature of the German national genius. The rigid rules prescribed by Opitz and Gottsched; the dreary imitations of works of French literature made and encouraged by Gottsched; even the sensible efforts of both to prune German literature of the barbarous crudities which had supervened in the wake of the Thirty Years' War, and the energetic attempts to preserve the purity of the language threatened by the affectation of



foreign words among the classes subject to the prestige of France in the cultural as well as the political life of the time; all these well-meant endeavors to lift German cultural life back upon a higher level, could not provide the avenues for the free flow of the richness and vitality slumbering in the depths of the German mind.

Such were the conditions of the cultural environment into which Kant was born. Here and there slight improvements of an individual and minor character had appeared. But the major factors in the general condition had not improved. The impotence of the central power was an irresistible temptation to the encroachments not only of the German sovereign princes but of foreign powers as well. There was no central focus of vision, of idealism, of ultimate purpose and reason-for-being, in which the German of that day could integrate his aspirations. There was for all the groping desires and ideal necessities no supreme national locus, which the individual man craves and without which he is intellectually and spiritually homeless and fruitless. The noble spirituality of the music of Bach is the successful effort of a supreme genius to raise from his own soul the cathedral of his spiritual home. But only a transcendent genius like Bach is capable of a real victory over actuality. The assertion of the absolute primacy of dynamic individuality by Leibniz can be understood, though hardly as a victory over the crushing tyranny of circumstance, yet as an escape into a world of ideals and a dimly—not “clearly and distinctly”—!—prescient rebellion against the actual enslavement of the individual by the system of absolutism and poverty. It was not until the classic era, the time of Kant’s maturity, that the idea of Leibniz was transformed into a practical force.

The ordinary “subject” had no resources to create his own spiritual world or to find an intellectual refuge among abstract substitutes for a substantial freedom. His circle

of life contracted more and more till only the most immediate and indispensable necessities held his attention. Everything beyond this narrow circle was beyond his control, his desire, his concern, even his curiosity. It was dangerous, disturbing, and not contributory to the meagre resources of his existence. It added to the hazards of his precarious being. A life in which the expense of a penny becomes a matter of grave responsibility, begets an ethical code which demands that the circumference of activity, utterance, and interests be drawn in as closely as possible.

This false atomistic type of individualism, this negative and barren ideal of independence, common in the eighteenth century, the result of the meanly necessitous condition of life, is the essential characteristic of the *Kleinbürger*, the petty burgher, later nicknamed "philistine." A part of this character was the mean utilitarianism by which the progress of true enlightenment was hampered. The anxious penny-wisdom, the hand-to-mouth pragmatism, the censoriousness and envy, the lack and hatred of vision, the spiteful enmity toward the gifted and the independent, the smug pride of commonness among equals together with abject servility toward superiors, all came from the same economic-political source of strangled trade, poverty, and absolutism.

During the childhood of Kant a gradual improvement began. About 1740, progress was definitely established. It continued until the disaster and collapse of the age of Napoleon. But a cowed mental condition deeply impressed through generations, is slow to adapt itself to larger circumstances. The philistinism of 1740, even of 1787, lagged far behind the economic advance. It was too intimidated and constrained not to regard new resources, methods, and views with fear, suspicion, and the scorn of the unquickenened.

The burgher of 1740 was less forceful and enterprising than the craft master of 1440. He was afraid to discount notes. He even demanded futile laws against discounting. The modern credit system made slow headway against the inbred, blind terror of debt. There was no impulse for association and coöperation in enterprises. Modern economic and industrial technique developed with extraordinary slowness. In the second part of *Faust*, completed twenty-seven years after Kant's death, even Goethe had not the vision to substitute the principle of organization for the makeshift of magic. Civic life throughout the eighteenth century did not succeed in freeing itself from the medieval artisan ideal of individual production.

The retardation of the economic intelligence of the burgher has left a long and interesting trail in the literature of Kant's contemporaries. *Die Abderiten*, by Wieland; *Luise*, by Voss; *Hermann und Dorothea*, by Goethe; Jean Paul's novel, give a rich and varied picture of the meaner as well as the better aspects of the lives and minds of these burghers. Perhaps it is even more important to note the authors' desire in all these works, with the exception of the sharp satire of *Die Abderiten*, to idealize these worthy burghers, who are conceived almost as representatives of a modern Golden Age. The burgher, now well to do and capable, but still embodying the old artisan ethics and technique, is in the literature of this age the backbone of the social structure. He returns to a renewed though somewhat wistful embodiment during the middle of the nineteenth century in the novels of Raabe, one of the most important modern prose writers.

The power of the territorial princes tended at first, through the greater returns from taxation, to increase. With the exception of a few, like the dukes of Weimar and Gotha, the prince of Meiningen, and some others, these absolute monarchs were interested in the empty formalities

of their court life and their little armies modeled after the pattern set by Louis XIV, and later by Frederick the Great. They lived lives wholly apart from the people. All the higher administrative and military posts were reserved for the nobility.

The ancient upper class of burghers in the larger cities, acquired a more substantial prominence. Unfortunately, they also had as the result of absolutism and economic disorganization, developed an atomistic individualism of their own. They, too, formed an isolated group. They, like the nobles, kept aloof from the deeper currents of progress which tended to unite the productive forces in the German people. They led exclusive, self-centered lives, often given to foppishness, luxurious display, and frivolity, and wasting their mental powers in rococo artificiality and mock sentiment and refinement. The so-called anacreontic poetry of the age, with its society-shepherds and shepherdesses, and its patch, powder, and fan-sentiment, represents the best—and often a charming—aspect of this life of sensitive, refined and gracious, but superficial and futile pastimes.

The main cultural impulse had to come and did come from the burgher class, and throughout the development of the new age it bore intellectually, ethically, and aesthetically, the features of the burgher character. In those absolutistic states ruled by princes, most of whom were devoid of culture and ideas, there was only one outlet for the growing sense of importance, independence, and desire for extension of power springing from the increasing prosperity of the burgher. That outlet was intellectual. In the culture of the mind alone the ambitious burgher of the age of the absolute prince, the police-state, the rigid social class-system, the fixed order of civic conduct, could find a refuge for individual freedom and ambition. The citizen assumed often almost incredible burdens to secure for his



sons the best education to be had. The sons of burghers soon began to fill the learned professions and the higher offices in cities and states. Their example stimulated even the poorer classes who could not afford to send their sons to universities. As in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the people began to read with zeal. Journals and circulating libraries multiplied. Cheap editions of the old *Volksbücher* were sold in the markets by the market women. Goethe tells in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* of the importance of this popular literature during his childhood. A new intellectual vigor and initiative appeared in the cities which had been of old the birthplaces of German culture, as Strassburg and the cities of Northern Bavaria, Thuringia, Franconia, the Palatinate, Saxony.

The new class of burgher officials pushing up from below into administration, however, did not reach the top. Even Frederick the Great would have no commoners in the highest positions. But the favored nobility had not the inner strength, even in its position of authority, to impress itself culturally upon the people. They were not like the nobles of England and France who by virtue of education, culture, large vision, and statesmanship were readily acknowledged as fitted for political rule. The majority of the German nobility of the later eighteenth century, giving their attention to cultivating their lands, hunting, attending their princes at court, remained on the whole in an inferior condition of education or culture. There were, however, notable exceptions, as the Humboldts and Goethe's friends in Weimar.

The educated sons of the burghers were the leaven of the new society. It was the burgher qualities of mind and character, refined and developed through education, which shaped the dominant collective personality of the latter part of the eighteenth century.



The traditional morality, the burgher conscience, expanded to comprehend and do justice to the new conditions. But it retained its fibre and its character. It clung to its absolutism of individual responsibility, its particularism of self-determination.

This conscience morality found its strongest abode and bulwark in the Prussian state during the rule of Frederick William I and Frederick the Great. The latter created the final liberalized form of absolute monarchy, which ultimately led to the constitutional system. He represented "Enlightened Absolutism" at its best. He called himself the "first servant" of the state, implying that he was subject to the same laws of duty and responsibility as his subjects. It can be easily pointed out that an "absolutely sovereign servant" is politically a singular type of servant. Nevertheless, Frederick's insistence on the civic responsibility of the ruler is epoch-making, if it is compared with the "*l'Etat c'est Moi*" of the older absolutism. It is the enactment into the constitution of his state of the essential code of morality, characteristic of the enlightened burgher of the later eighteenth century. Ethically, the historical German burgher state was reborn in the Prussian state of Frederick.

Frederick did not, as is often said, create the bureaucratic state. On the contrary, he greatly reduced the bureaucracy. He eliminated the unfit, the corrupt, and the superfluous officials; he simplified the machinery of government; and he exempted matters of personal conscience, especially religion, from official interference. A comparison will emphasize the reduction of the bureaucracy under Frederick. In Heidelberg, in the sixteenth century, one-fourth of the tax-payers were paid officials.

Discipline, obedience to law, absolute conscience, were the principal virtues of Frederick's state. That state was

the supreme official representative, the constitutional agent of the "Practical Reason."

We thus comprehend the great political, social, and intellectual forces which bound together the development of the character of the German burgher, the ethical conception embodied in the state of Frederick the Great, and Kant's categorical imperative, into an historic unity.

### CONTRARY TENDENCIES

One may characterize the development thus far described, as the dominant economic-political part of the cultural environment of the age of Kant. Simultaneously with it, however, there arose out of the growing desire for freedom, an opposite current of ideas. This movement, exhibiting a bewildering variety, richness, and complexity of factors, was held together by a fundamental unity of intention, which, obscure at first, attained finally, in the work of Herder and Goethe, to clarity and comprehensive definition as the naturalistic doctrine of the primacy of spontaneous individual impulse.

This movement is variously described as emotionalism, or subjectivism, or romanticism, or naturalism. In the present very brief summary, it will be characterized as Vitalistic Naturalism. An essential part of the definition of this vitalistic naturalism is its conscious, complete negation of the fundamental assumptions of rationalism, especially of the primacy of reason, of the separate entity of reason as such, and of the identity of the essence of reality with the content of ratiocinative ("clear and distinct") reflection upon "empirical" or sense data.

In its positive aspect vitalistic naturalism combined all the various historical reactions against rationalism, from Locke to Herder and beyond. It included Locke's theory

of the primacy of sense perception as the source of the contents of the mind, and all the later developments of sensualism, or sense-ism; the psychological conclusions drawn by the leading physiologists of the late seventeenth and the early eighteenth century, also the more cautious associationistic theories of Hartley and Priestley according to which the mind was regarded as essentially the product of the mechanism of the physiology of the nerves; the theory of sensibilism, or *Gefühl*, according to which not reason but inner feeling holds the primary place in mental processes, represented among a large number of writers by Shaftesbury, Rousseau, Hamann, and by many English, French, German, Swiss writers on aesthetic theory; mysticism, which is essentially the religious form of the theory of sensibilism; German Romanticism in its proper sense, in which the individual inner feeling was singled out as the sole source of all reality: "*Gefühl ist Alles*"; and finally a variety of more or less vague notions concerning the cognitive functions of feeling, which appeared in the writings of the more popular philosophers, among whom Mendelssohn and Jacobi are prominent.<sup>1</sup> To these movements were joined ideas derived from Giordano Bruno's cosmic vitalism, the vitalism of Leibniz's monadology, and the powerful vitalistic trend revealed in the works of many of the leading physiologists of the later eighteenth century, especially of Haller, on whose physiology Herder based his psychology.

This vast and complex variety of conceptions was unified and harmonized by Herder.

Specific personality, the given individual, is according to Herder the primary integral factor of reality. Herder did not consider this individual as an absolute, as did the ideologues who regarded the individual as an embodiment

<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed account of these movements, see the present writer's study, *The Fundamental Ideas in Herder's Thought*, No VI, *Modern Philology*, November, 1923, Vol. XXI, pp. 113-132.

of Reason, or the naturalists of the school of Rousseau, whose mythical ideal, the natural man, was a total of instinctive perfection proceeding directly from the hand of the Creator; but as a relative being produced by a gradual biological and cultural development of the organic union of a primary spiritual principle with a physical principle in reciprocal formative relation to all the mechanical and spiritual factors of environment. The human individual, according to Herder, is the latest term in an endless, not necessarily ascending, series of evolution. This individual acts in the integral unity of all his powers. If, Herder says in one passage, a man could perform a single act identical in all its essential relations with that of an animal, say a lion, he would thereby cease to be a man. Reason is only one of the functions of personality; it is not superior to, it is not even primarily distinct from, any other faculty. Even the will is only one of the integral functions of personality; it is not primarily separate. There is no reason which is not also will, judgment, imagination, memory, sense perception. Reality, aesthetics, ethics, or to use the fundamental terms taken by Kant from the naturalistic psychology, namely, *Erkennen*, *Empfinden*, *Wollen*, are according to Herder not subject to the special criteria inherent in distinct faculties, such as theoretic reason, judgment, practical reason, but to criteria derived from the total organic nature of personality.

To the essentials of this view Goethe adhered throughout his intellectual development. Goethe differed from Herder chiefly in emphasizing the deductive principle of the vitalistic totality, the "*zusammenbrennende, zusammen-treffende Ganze*" of *Wilhelm Meister*, far more than Herder's requirement of inductive demonstration would allow. We shall see presently that Goethe tried to find in his synthetic totalism an essential identity with Kant's theoretic reason.



Herder's synthesis involved a theory of reality, epistemology, and psychology, fundamentally opposed to that of rationalism. The present survey is concerned with it not in its theoretical bearings, but only as one of the principal factors in the cultural environment of Kant's philosophy.

The characteristic aspects of this new tendency are exhibited in their most salient forms in the aesthetic theories and in the conceptions of the motives of conduct embodied in the representative works of literature of the last generation of the eighteenth century.

### AESTHETIC THEORY

The theory of beauty of the French classic period, that is, of the older rationalism, had been formed by Boileau. Imitation of nature, again proclaimed in the Renaissance as the aim of art, was interpreted by Boileau as imitation of the ideas of Reason, the "light of nature." "Nothing is beautiful except the true." Since, however, reason, which proceeds in accordance with "absolute, universal and necessary" rules, is the ultimate standard of the true, it follows that the rules of beauty and taste also must be "absolute, universal, and necessary." This theory, which left little room for individuality, governed, in the commonplace form into which it had been cast by Gottsched, German literary practice until about the time that Kant entered the university.

Soon, however, the classic French theory, which had been considerably weakened by Batteux, who substituted the term "beautiful nature" for Boileau's "true nature" as the standard of beauty, thereby begging the whole question, found itself confronted with opposition arising from two quarters. Bodmer and Breitinger, two German-Swiss writers, followers partly of the British literary weeklies,



and partly of Baumgarten, the author of *Aesthetica* and originator of that term, who had developed Leibniz's conception of the highest classes of "obscure and confused" monads into the objects of artistic expression, proposed the theory of *Naturwüchsigkeit*, native spontaneous individuality, as the standard of beauty.

The movement of sense-ism, including emotionalism, developed most fully in France, especially by Dubos, Condillac, and Diderot,<sup>2</sup> endeavored to base the definition of art, the distinctions between the different forms of art, the proper objects of artistic "imitation" and expression, and the standards of beauty and rules of technique upon differences of function between the senses. Lessing's theory that literature, pertaining to the sense of hearing, should embody in its composition the principle of succession, and the graphic arts, pertaining to sight, the principle of simultaneity, was derived from Diderot's *Letter on the Deaf and Dumb*.

Lessing, in his *Laokoon*, tried to save the rationalistic theory by combining it with the psychology of sense-ism. But his rationalism was not that of French classicism. He went back to Aristotle, and tried to substitute the latter's conceptions of imitation, truth, and artistic illusion, of the unities and style, and above all of characterization and motivation, for those of Boileau and the French classic poets. The fundamental rationalistic assumption, however, that art "imitates" abstract ideas, that, for instance, the gods of Homer are personified abstractions, remained in Lessing's theory.

Herder applied his principle of the organic unity of personality to all these problems. In his first *Kritisches Wäldchen*, beginning with a conclusive criticism of Lessing's theories, he showed that beauty and technique are not

<sup>2</sup> See for a full investigation of this development, Malcolm H. Dewey, *Herder's Relation to the Aesthetic Theory of the Eighteenth Century*, University of Chicago Dissertation, 1920 (The University of Chicago Libraries).

forms of abstract truth or universal rules of "reason," in the technical sense; that no special faculties or types of perception are the determining factors in art; but that all art is expression of specific personality, and that the conceptions of beauty and technique are primarily conceptions of values and characteristics of personality.

In this theory also, Goethe followed Herder for twenty-five years, until, in the middle of the nineties, he came under the influence of Schiller's theories, derived from Kant.

### LITERARY MOTIVATION

The system of motivation inherent in vitalistic naturalism is illustrated in a succession of some of Goethe's greatest works, particularly *Werther's Leiden*, the *Urfaust*, or original version of *Faust* written before his departure for Weimar, 1775; and the first version of *Wilhelm Meister*, written about ten years later. While rationalism interprets motives of conduct as conscious, fundamentally free and responsible decisions, naturalism conceives of them as obscure impulses, as motions subject to the push of circumstances, as actions of mysterious inner, personal powers, often, and especially by Goethe, named "daemonic." A vitalistic fate, regarded generally as benevolent, holds, as it were, the reins over the career of each, and especially of the gifted individual, the genius. Herder never accepted this prone fatalism, nor this equally prone optimism. He substituted for the passive, naturalistic conception of impulse the active conception of ethical spontaneity and responsibility inherent in his genetic theory of personality. Goethe began, soon after his arrival in Weimar, to develop, as is attested by his *Iphigenie* and *Tasso*, a conception of motives of conduct and conscience-morality, which is consciously akin to the ethics of Platonism and Stoicism and

not related to the philosophy of Kant. Throughout this period, which lasted until the beginning of his intimacy with Schiller, Goethe persisted in paralleling the Platonic-Stoic type of motivation with a further elaboration, especially in *Wilhelm Meister*, of the naturalistic impulse-morality. Both his belief in impulse-morality and his optimism regarding it found classic expression in his *Spruch*:

*"Ein guter Mensch in seinem dunklen Drange  
Ist sich des rechten Weges wohl bewusst."*

His later revision of *Wilhelm Meister* and his additions to the first part of *Faust*, made after 1795, when he had come into contact with Kant's *Critique of the Practical Reason*, embodied a very interesting change in ethical orientation.

There was comparatively little practical danger in the theory of impulse-ethics, as long as it was held by men of balanced characters, like Herder and Goethe. But that theory produced very serious and disturbing results among many of the younger and less gifted men of that generation. A movement, which named itself the "Storm-and-Stress," sprang up in which all the familiar consequences of emancipation from reasoned and accepted principles of conduct developed in their most tasteless, crude, and socially disturbing forms. Both Herder and Goethe reacted severely against these extravagances, and there is little doubt that some of the conservative tendencies appearing early in Goethe's view of life were intensified by his aversion to the turbulence and callow conceit of the Storm and Stress. Is it altogether unlikely that Kant was somewhat influenced by these conditions, of which he cannot have been unaware among his students, in the rigorous exclusion of impulse from moral conduct, an exclusion which proved too severe even to one of his most devoted follow-

ers, Schiller? And is it unlikely that the Prussian government was moved partly by the political and social dangers inherent in a movement of extreme naturalism, to encourage extensive migration of students to the university in which Kant taught the absolute rule of duty?

### REACTIONS OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF KANT ON ITS ENVIRONMENT

The most important immediate influence of the philosophy of Kant appeared in aesthetic theory. Goethe was much interested in the *Critique of Judgment*. He praised particularly the emphasis laid by Kant on disinterestedness as the essential character of aesthetic purposiveness. The idea as such was not new to him. He had frequently asserted the requirement of *Zwecklosigkeit*, both in art and in science, in opposition to the naive utilitarianism of the popular philosophy. He had found confirmation of it in the *Ethics* of Spinoza, which he had read in the middle eighties. Now, with Kant's support, he regarded the question of purpose as settled.

He was also pleased with Kant's confirmation of his own distinction between nature and art. But beyond that, his and Kant's conclusions diverged. Goethe, in accordance with his fundamental view of the essential unity of all life, used the distinction between nature and art, which in Kant's philosophy was essential, as a starting point for an ultimate harmonious synthesis of the two. This monistic tendency is revealed in its most characteristic aspects in the combination of the rationalistic with the naturalistic principle of motivation worked into the second and final version of *Wilhelm Meister*. It found its final theoretical expression in *Natur und Kunst*, a sonnet written by Goethe



in 1802, which, because it sums up the essence of the classic creed of "freedom within law" held in common by Goethe and Schiller, should be quoted:

#### NATUR UND KUNST

Natur und Kunst, sie scheinen sich zu fliehen,  
 Und haben sich, eh man es denkt, gefunden;  
 Der Widerwille ist auch mir geschwunden,  
 Und beide scheinen gleich mich anzuziehen.  
 Es gilt wohl nur ein redliches Bemühen!  
 Und wenn wir erst in abgemessnen Stunden  
 Mit Geist und Fleiss uns an die Kunst gebunden,  
 Mag frei Natur im Herzen wieder glühen.  
 So ist's mit aller Bildung auch beschaffen;  
 Vergebens werden ungebundne Geister  
 Nach der Vollendung reiner Höhe streben.  
 Wer Grosses will, muss sich zusammenraffen:  
 In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister,  
 Und das Gesetz nur kann uns Freiheit geben.

Schiller accepted Kant's distinction between the beautiful, as a universal, and the agreeable, as a personal, feeling of disinterested pleasure. Kant's "pure pleasure" in the imaginative intuition became in Schiller's philosophy, most adequately expressed in his aesthetic poems, especially *Das Ideal und das Leben*, the selfless contemplation of the "*reine Formen*." The freedom of the aesthetic life from the pressure of good and evil, and from the seriousness of responsible activity, characterized by Kant as the play of the phenomena of the imagination, became the root of Schiller's theory of the play-impulse as the source of art.

In Kant's ethical doctrine, both Goethe and Schiller accepted the rejection of ulterior purposes, especially those of eudaemonism and utility. But they could not accept the rigorous exclusion of impulse from moral conduct and the doctrine of the "radical evil." Yet both these Kantian doctrines were responsible for the introduction of some of the most important additions to the two greatest works of Goethe.



In the original version of *Wilhelm Meister* the motivation of the leading character is purely naturalistic. Wilhelm is led by impulse and circumstance. He has a good will, but never takes the initiative, and he never compels circumstance or his own action. He trusts that fate will turn everything toward his inward and outward improvement. The first version, written in the middle of the eighties, received the title, *Wilhelm Meister's Theatrical Mission*. Goethe at the time regarded the story as finished. But in 1794, at the beginning of his friendship with Schiller and acquaintance with the philosophy of Kant, he again took up the story and added what is now the second half of *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. In its present form the novel reveals two fundamental changes, one of which is clearly an effort to harmonize the motivation with the essentials of the classic ethic-aesthetic ideal of "freedom," i. e., individual choice within law, based chiefly on Kant's ethics; and the second is an effort to transcend the Kantian dualism of the moral law and nature, or impulse, by a new synthesis, based on Herder's and Goethe's conception of the integral organic unity of the mental and physical powers.

In the first part of the final version, since it was impossible, without destroying the structure of the whole, to transform it, Goethe left the principle of impulse-motivation intact. But he added, at various crucial periods in Wilhelm's life, a succession of "unknown" characters who argue the ethics of ethic-aesthetic freedom and initiative against Wilhelm's fatalistic proneness. These unknown conscience-moralists are later, in the second part, introduced as members of a secret society, which has been anonymously supervising Wilhelm's career, and now initiates him as a member. He receives his apprentice's diploma, which contains aphoristic instructions, the general trend of which is toward a synthesis of impulse and deliberation.

erate purposive judgment. Schiller, to whom Goethe communicated the manuscript for suggestions, was, however, not satisfied. He requested another, concluding chapter, in which the ethical aspect of conduct would be more fully represented. Goethe followed his advice and wrote the eighth book, the book of Natalie, the ideal woman won by Wilhelm. Natalie embodies the complete harmonious combination of instinct and conscious choice, the supreme stage of conduct, in which the moral law becomes conscious impulse. Some of the philosophical considerations underlying this harmonization of nature and ethical will are expressed in Schiller's argument on the three ages of civilization in his essay *On the Naïve and the Sentimental*, written soon after, and in his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*. Schiller, dissatisfied with Rousseau's belief in the fall of Man, through the sin of civilization, from the instinctive perfection of the "Golden Age," added a theory of a final age of ideal being. His three stages of man were: original instinctive perfection, internal division through critical self-consciousness, and a final consciously natural harmony of all the powers of man through aesthetic culture. Goethe rejected the myth of the Golden Age. He regarded the harmonious unity of life as the essence and goal of civilization.

Goethe's monistic impulse to transcend all opposites in an ultimate unity was decisive also in his completion of the first part of *Faust*. In the original version, the *Urfaust*, written before 1775, the motivation of Faust was purely naturalistic. Faust desired to understand the central unity of nature, vitalistically symbolized in the macrocosm and the microcosm. But in the *Urfaust*, Faust is hardly the principal figure. He is little developed. The principal part of the action, of the motivation, and of the pathos and human significance is the tragedy of Margarete. But in the final version the focus is shifted. Faust now is the

principal figure. Margarete is an incident in the varied career determined by Faust's "*dunkle Drang*." The primary naturalistic impulse acquires now an ethical end; Faust's dramatic conflict becomes the sum of the active relations of the principles of good and evil. Goethe rejected Kant's theory of absolute, primary evil. Following the optimistic conception of evil as an agent of the principle of good, found already in Jakob Boehme and in Leibniz, he developed Mephistopheles into the unwilling servant of God. The original tragedy of impulse and infanticide becomes the drama of the ultimate goal of man amid the conflict between desire of knowledge, hunger for the happiness of the senses, and aspiration toward an ethical life.

The ultimate monistic synthesis of life was Goethe's supreme aim. His desire for harmonization was so great and persistent, that in 1817, thirteen years after Kant's death, in his essay on *Anschauende Urteilskraft* (Intuitive Judgment), he asserted an essential identity of his own intuitive conception of the unity of all things, which is "regulative" in a manner similar to Kant's theoretic reason in relation to the "ideas," with that reason in its process of "descending from an intuition of a whole to particulars."

From the timid, narrow, constrained *Kleinbürger*, characteristic of the environment of the childhood of Kant, to Lessing, Herder, Goethe, Schiller, and Frederick the Great, the contemporaries of his mature work, the distance is great both in time and in cultural degree. We have been obliged to travel this distance in seven-league boots, as it were, alighting for brief moments only on some of the most salient and characteristic points in the vast scene of the intellectual life of the eighteenth century. We have tried to gain a rapid view of the two complex developments of conditions and ideas, now moving along with

Kant's thought, supporting and following it, now clashing with it, diverging, and again converging. We have had, now and then, glimpses of the marvelous fertility of fundamental ideas, by virtue of which they acquire new life, new meanings, and new powers and avenues of germination from every contact, whether sympathetic or antagonistic. Both the collaboration and the conflict of ideas are endless; and the more fundamental a philosophy, the more it ultimately profits by its conflicts as well as its alliances.

It is the fundamental character of the philosophy of Kant rather than specific theoretical or practical relations, which not only justifies but demands a survey of the principal factors in his cultural environment. On April 11, 1827, twenty-three years after Kant's death, Goethe said to Eckermann: "Kant is without any doubt the best of all the modern philosophers. He is the one whose teaching is still effective and has penetrated most deeply into our German culture." If Goethe's judgment is true—and there is no reason to doubt it—Kant holds his position of fruitful eminence not only as a technician of philosophy, but as an interpreter and a moulder of the cultural life of the German people during the last two centuries.

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KANT, THE SEMINAL THINKER





## KANT THE SEMINAL THINKER

**K**ANT'S commanding position and historical significance in the development of modern philosophy are not due to the finality of any of his principal conclusions; but rather to the immense impetus which he gave to philosophy in its several main fields. By his thoroughgoing reconsideration of the basic problems of philosophy—The Problem of the Nature of Existence, The Problem of Values, and the Problem of the Relation of Existence and Values—he cleared the ground and sowed the seeds of fresh constructive work.

European philosophy had reached a deadlock. The two main currents of modern philosophy had run themselves out. Philosophy must find a new vital spring and a new direction of movement. It found these through Kant.

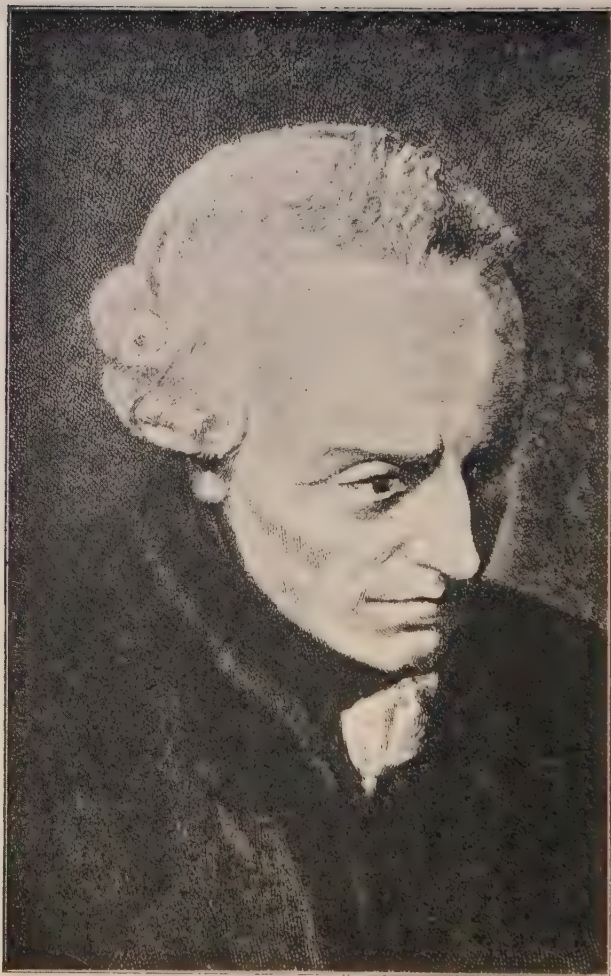
The outcome of British psychological empiricism was subjectivistic individualism, and a scepticism scarcely distinguishable from illusionism. If all knowledge, so-called, arises, one knows not how, from one knows not where, and consists merely of associational ties or customary sequences of ideas passively formed between sense impressions in an inert individual mind, objective science is unaccounted for. If knowledge be nothing more than a bundle of habits, blindly arising in the individual mind and if the mind in turn be nothing more than the passive stage on which sense impressions mysteriously appear, form connections and disappear, leaving faint footprints in the mental dust, mathematics becomes merely a set of symbols for relations

among the individual subject's ideas, physical science becomes simply a name for the more persistent ways in which the concrete atomic contents of the individual subject's mind are connected. The individual mind is shut up within its own skin. Indeed the mind and its skin are nothing but more or less shifting contours in the accidental procession of impressions and their copies. The logical outcome of Humian empiricism is a solipsism in which not even the lonely self has any definite and persisting nature. Kant never doubted the objectivity of physical science; never doubted that, in physics, there are universally valid and precisely definable principles. These involve the application of mathematics to the sense world. Kant, therefore, rejects psychological individualism.

The philosophy of Leibniz escaped subjectivism by cutting the Gordian knot and affirming dogmatically that all knowledge is merely the explication, by rational analysis, of what is implicated or rolled up in the individual mind or monad. Every monad contains implicitly in its own being all the relations which make up the universal system of reality. All that the monad needs to do is to spin physical science and metaphysics out of its own inwards. Sense perception has a very dubious status in the Leibnizian philosophy. It is true this speaks of "truths of fact." But, strictly speaking, nothing gets into the monad from without. Therefore, since sense-experience can be only the first dim stage in the monad's process of coming to reflective self-consciousness, all the truths that science discovers are already prefigured in the monad's subconscious life. All knowledge is the result of sheer analysis of what is virtually present from the outset. Science is excogitated by the individual monad in accordance with the logical laws of *identity* and *sufficient reason*. There is really no place for a physical world in the Leibnizian system. One does not see how there is any place for other monads than one's







IMMANUEL KANT

(After an Original Painting in the City Museum, Koenigsberg)

self. The Leibnizian philosophy, in its logical outcome, is perilously close to the Humian.

Such is the deadlock or dilemma which Kant faces. If the individual subject's own mental processes constitute all there is to knowledge then there is no objective science. If science be the necessary analytical explication of the contents of a monad which reflects the universe, there is no physical world and there is no ground for real intercourse between the monads.

Now Kant assumed that there is a physical world, accessible to a plurality of selves, and that the mind makes judgments that are valid for all similarly constituted and situated minds. Upon the occasion of sensory stimulations there are synthetic judgments, that is judgments in which the predicate adds to one's knowledge of the subject, which are not passively derived copies of sensory stimuli. Science, meaning thereby a system of objectively valid truths in regard to nature, is the result of the *activity of a principle of intellectual synthesis* which organizes and interprets the data supplied through the senses. The sense manifold gives the matter of knowledge. As such, it has no separate existence. It does not consist of percepts and images. These have already been formed by acts of synthesis out of the given stimuli. *Experience is always, in some degree, formed or ordered.* For science two things are requisite: (I) Sensory stimulations. (II) The synthetic activity of thought. The latter is *a priori*, not in the psychological sense but in the sense that the various forms of intellectual synthesis—space, time, and the categories—are modes of the activity of the universal principle of synthesis as it functions in all finite thinkers. The transcendental ego is not your or my empirical ego. It is the universal principle of synthesis which thinks in all of us insofar as we think objectively.

The mind and its objects are correlative. If we use the term "subject" not for the individual self but for the universal Knower, then Kant's conclusion is that, since the Knower and the objects known are strictly correlative, the Knower is not an object of knowledge. Otherwise it could not be the synthetic activity presupposed in all knowing. The objects could not be constituted, since the sense manifold would not appear as a system of related existents, without the Knower. A recognition of the existence of a system of objects of knowledge presupposes the synthetic principle of activity which is never an object. Experience is the complex product of the intercourse of the ego with an unknown reality which appears in partial and fragmentary form as the realm of phenomena.

Kant's famous distinction of *phenomena* and *noumena* has been much misunderstood. Kant is himself largely responsible. There are two chief alternative interpretations. (I) Kant, in spite of his heroic efforts, was a subjective idealist, an inconsistent mixture of Hume and Leibniz. (II) The distinction is not between phenomena as subjective experiences and noumena as a plurality of objects unknown but in one-one correspondence with phenomenal objects. Then phenomena or *appearances* (*Erscheinung* is the word which Kant nearly always uses) are the partial expressions, known to us, of the Real, which is a Systematic Totality thinkable as the *Ideal Object of knowledge*, but not knowable in its concrete and harmonious wholeness. Then phenomenal knowledge, partial though it must always be, is continuous with the totality of the Real.

I take it the latter is the true interpretation. The *thing-in-itself* or *noumenal order* is the limiting concept of an ideal totality or systematic whole of experience. This ideal totality, in Kant's theory of knowledge, has no constitutive value. It does not enable us to predict just what and how

we shall experience. For the data of knowledge we must receptively wait upon sensory stimuli. But the ideal of a systematic and complete unity of experience, which is identical with the World-Ground, is the spur and guide by which we are led to aim at ever more comprehensiveness and coherence in the interpretation of the sensory data. We know phenomenally; not because our knowledge is illusory but because it is fragmentary, partial, never wholly coherent and far from comprehensive. Scientifically we know the conditioned or relative and its transcendental implicates. But the very presuppositions, the transcendental implicates of knowledge point us towards the Ideal Object which impels us and guides us in the quest for ever more adequate comprehensiveness and coherence. We seek to connect all the phenomena of mind *as if* there were an abiding principle of personal identity. We seek to connect the phenomena of physical matter *as if* they all belonged to a complete system or community of causal relations. We seek to interpret selves and nature in their inter-relations *as if* they were complementary expressions of a supreme and self-sufficient world-ground—"a self-subsistent, primeval and creative reason in relation to which we so employ our reason in the field of experience, as if all objects drew their origin from that archetype of all reason."<sup>1</sup>

Thus the idea of God is "nothing more than a demand upon reason that it shall regulate the connection which it and its subordinate faculties introduce into the phænomena of the world by principles of systematic unity, and consequently, that it shall regard all phænomena as originating from one all-embracing being."<sup>2</sup> Thus "the hypothesis of a supreme intelligence, sole cause of the universe, is always of the greatest service to reason." The Idea of a systematic unity in nature is the ideal ground of the consist-

<sup>1</sup> Meiklejohn's translation of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 412; Adickes' ed., p. 529.

<sup>2</sup> Meikeljohn, p. 420; Adickes, p. 538.



ent and harmonious exercise of reason.<sup>3</sup> Thus the noumenon is problematical. It contains no contradiction and is a limiting concept for the sensuous. Its objective reality is ideal. It cannot be cognized.

The first conception of the relation of phenomena and noumena has much plausibility if one consider the *Transcendental Analytic* alone and especially in the first edition. There is much matter in the *Analytic* and indeed in the entire first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* which, if taken by itself, would justify the conclusion that Kant did not emancipate his theory of knowledge from a subjectivism for which the empirical world as known is but an orderly series of representations of unknowable realities (things-in-themselves).

On the other hand, the prevailing spirit of the *Transcendental Dialectic* and especially of the *Appendix* in the second edition points to the conclusion that Kant finally developed a position in which the relation of phenomena to noumena is that of the Partial and Conditioned to the Unconditioned and systematic Totality of the Real. Even here Kant vacillates back and forth, in the *Appendix*, between scepticism and the fundamental thesis of objective or absolute Idealism (I use this term to designate the attitude common to the great post-Kantian Idealists, German and English). Whenever he is insisting on the Idea of Systematic Unity, of an Intelligible and Coherent Ground of phenomena, he is, in principle, an Objective Idealist. When he qualifies this position, in a skeptical mood, the Idea of the Systematic Unity becomes a heuristic principle only.

I think that Kant, in his development from the pre-critical to the critical phase of his thinking, was moving steadily towards the following theory: The Empirical Ego is a conditioned element in the series of natural phenomena.

<sup>3</sup> See Meiklejohn, p. 425; Adickes, p. 543.

Physical nature (the whole space-time order) and human nature are mutually conditioning and conditioned factors in the whole empirical realm of phenomena. Their determinate grounds lie beyond the reach of a cognitive interpretation of phenomena; but the entire series of external and internal phenomena must have a common ground in the Systematic Unity of the Real. The latter is adumbrated for us in the notion of a Supreme, Self-existent and Creative Intelligence which is the inevitable implicate of our progressive knowing of phenomenal existence.

This conception dominates Chapter III, "The ideal of Pure Reason," in the *Transcendental Dialectic*. More particularly it is elaborated with much repetition in section VII of this chapter, especially in the subdivision, "Of the Ultimate End of the Natural Dialectic of Human Reason."

In Chapter III, and in the succeeding "Transcendental Doctrine of Method," Chapter I on "The Discipline of Pure Reason" and especially Chapter II on "The Canon of Pure Reason," Kant returns again and again to the Ideas of Pure Reason. He reflects upon their significance and implications from all sides; as theoretical regulative ideas or theoretical hypotheses and as moral postulates. How repeatedly insistent is Kant on the necessity of the ideas of the unitary soul and God, and especially of the latter, as the regulative ideals which guide us into the greatest possible systematic unity in the connection of the phenomena of consciousness and of nature respectively! It is no exaggeration to assert that for him the whole growth of knowledge presupposes that there is a complete and systematic or coherent Intelligible Unity of which all phenomena are expressions. But, of course, for Kant the Unity cannot be known. It is an *Ideal Object*; an *Object-in-the-Idea*. On grounds of moral experience it becomes a practical postulate. Here the idea of God as the Supreme Spiritual Reality gives systematic unity to the moral life,

for it alone grounds the harmony and unity between moral personality and the cosmic conditions of happiness and immortal life.

Thus the idea of God as a theoretical regulative principle means that all phenomena, could we but know, are partial manifestations of an Intelligible Coherent or Harmonious Whole of experience; the idea of God, as practical postulate, adds to the theoretical ideal the rational faith that this Coherent and Intelligible System or Whole is the ground and conservator of moral values. The merely hypothetical and heuristic Speculative Idealism of pure reason becomes the Axiological Idealism of the practical reason. In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant takes a further step in the direction of a definitive Objective Idealism.

The fundamental doctrines of the *Critique of Practical Reason* and the *Metaphysic of Morals*, and even those of the *Critique of Judgment*, are already outlined in the concluding sections of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

An astonishing diversity of standpoints claim descent from Kant. The chief of these are: Objective Idealism, with its variants in Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and the later English and Italian versions; various neo-Kantianisms and neo-Criticisms; the voluntaristic metaphysics of Schopenhauer; the voluntaristic and instrumentalist strains in pragmatism and its European kin; the more or less positivistic subjectivism or "ideaism" of Mach and his kin; the positivistic idealism of the "As If" philosophy of Vaihinger, etc. Kant has been, without doubt, the most seminal influence in modern philosophy. The reason for this is that while, in the final and crowning or critical phase of his philosophical development, he had moved away from subjectivism and skepticism and reached a species of objective idealism, his idealism was held in a cautious and critical, even skeptical spirit. *His final conclusions were, as Professor Kemp Smith puts it, tentative and experimen-*

*tal.* Kant never strikes the confident, sweeping and dogmatic notes of Fichte, Schelling or Hegel. Kant's *Absolute* is always, at most, an inevitable hypothesis or a necessary postulate.

Three highly significant positive conclusions do emerge from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, notwithstanding all its inconsistencies and waverings, its metaphysical sallies and retreats: (I) The new distinction between the *objective* and the *subjective*. The *objective* in the realm of appearances is the physical causal series, since this series is simple, uniform and precisely determinable. The *subjective* consists of the physiological and psychological appearances, since these are complex and variable. But the subjective series are parts of the all-inclusive spatial and temporal world-orders. (II) The synthetic processes, which condition all experience, are *not* acts of the empirical subject. They are the expressions of the noumenal activity of a universal thinking principle which, as the precondition of empirical consciousness, cannot be experienced; but which, Kant suggests more than once, may well be the noumenal ground of the physical factors in experience. (III) The final distinction, in the Critical philosophy, between *appearance* and *reality* is not a contrast between experience and that which cannot be experienced. It is a distinguishing of factors both of which are involved in the determination of experience as meaningful. *Appearance* is crude experience, the manifold of sense, organized and interpreted as far as it goes. *Reality* is the Ideal Ground, the Intelligible Order, the Systematic Unity of Reason, which is presupposed and involved in that progressing organization and interpretation of the sense-manifold which constitutes commonsense knowledge and science; and is still more emphatically involved in the moral life.

For Kant consciousness is essentially the activity of judgment, not as aware of itself but as necessarily implied



in the synthetic treatment of sensory data. It is the dynamic capacity for the awareness of meaning or values—logical, ethical, aesthetic values. This is the objective nature of consciousness. As individuated consciousness, it is a part of the objective order. Our mental states are objects—just as truly as physical objects—for consciousness. Consciousness is awareness of objects in relation. It is awareness of meanings, but never awareness of awareness. The self, as the individual knower, is a part of the natural self. The individual self is conscious only insofar as it is conscious of objects. And when it is conscious of its own states these too are objects. We have no right to conclude that the transcendental analysis of knowledge implies that the empirical self is a noumenal self capable of existing independently of the natural system. Scientifically the nature of consciousness is awareness of meaning. On moral grounds we may be led to postulate the abidingness of the self as ethical personality, but not on scientific grounds.

In fine, Kant's doctrine of knowledge and its place in reality implies: (I) That there is a dynamic organizing principle active in all stages of experience. (II) That, while it is impossible for finite minds, dependent as they are upon the reception of stimuli from sources independent of themselves, ever to envisage concretely the coherent totality of experience, the nature of our knowledge implies the validity of the ideal of a systematic and coherent whole or organized totality of experience. Phenomena are not illusions. They are real but fragmentary bits of knowledge. The noumenal order is not something that exists mysteriously behind phenomena. It is the ideal order which is presupposed to be real, although it is not realizable as such, in every step in the development of human knowledge. We must needs think as if it were the ultimately real. (III) The noumenal order is the divine

order—the common ground of our sensory experience and our theoretical and practical activities. We are thus led to the concept of a Spiritual Ground of nature and human nature. But we can never know this ground, since to know it would imply that we possessed the complete totality of experience and had completely interpreted this in terms of reason.

Kant limits scientific knowledge to mathematically ordered sense experience. He excludes psychology and even physiology from science, on the ground of the inevitable inexactitude of their subject-matters. Still more he excludes the aesthetic, moral and religious experiences from the field of science. Kant was a child of the enlightenment, a rationalist. For him what we can measure we can know. He was deficient in sentiment, in imagination and in historical consciousness.

The regulative ideals of pure science become, when man's moral life is examined, *practical postulates*. They might be called the transcendental postulates of moral experience. Kant's conception of moral personality is that it is self-determining, self-legislating being. The moral self recognizes the principle of duty to be the law of its own being. In obeying the behests of duty the self is not obeying commands opposed upon it from without. It is rather realizing itself, willing itself into more adequate being. Thus, the moral self can and should look at its own motives objectively, weigh and choose between them in the light of the absolute principle of the inherent and inalienable value of the moral personality as a member of the Kingdom of Ends. The moral self must postulate or, in other words, assume and believe that it is self-determining; that before it lies the endless vocation of realizing moral perfection by living as a member of the commonwealth of moral personalities and that the order of physical nature is, all appearances to the contrary notwithstand-

ing, subordinate and instrumental to the realization of moral personality. Thus, faith in God as the supreme reality through whose creative and sustaining energy the physical world is formed and ordered as the instrument of spirit—in other words, faith in the supremacy of the good—is the essence of religion. To quote Kant: "There is, however, one thing in our soul which, when we take a right view of it, we cannot cease to regard with the highest astonishment, and in regard to which admiration is right or even elevating, and that is the original moral capacity in us generally . . . a capacity which proclaims a Divine origin."<sup>4</sup> "Duty! . . . what origin is there worthy of thee, and where is to be found the root of thy noble descent? A root to be derived from which is the indispensable condition of the only worth which men can give themselves." Kant defines religion as the recognition of our duties as divine commands.

Thus, as Norman Kemp Smith puts it, Kant "places in the forefront of his system the moral values; and he does so under the conviction that in living up to the opportunities, in whatever rank of life, of our common heritage, we obtain a truer and deeper insight into ultimate issues than can be acquired through the abstruse subtleties of metaphysical speculation."<sup>5</sup>

There remain unsurmounted dualisms in Kant—in metaphysics, the dualism of sense and thought; in ethics, the dualism of inclination and duty.

Kant has been called a formalist in ethics. The criticism is partly just. But, in his doctrine of moral personality as an end-in-itself, does he not transcend formalism? He has been called an individualist. But he recognizes clearly that the moral self is such only as a member of the kingdom of ends. And I add, in this day of emphasis on

<sup>4</sup> Abbott, T. K., *Kant's Theory of Ethics*, pp. 357f.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

<sup>6</sup> Smith, N. K., *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 1x.

the social, that I do not see how the individual can contribute much that is worth while to social reconstruction if he does not begin by realizing and respecting moral personality in himself. He who does not reverence moral qualities in himself will not recognize them in others. Self-respect is the precondition of respect for others.

In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant gropes his way toward suggestions as to how these dualisms might be conceived as overcome. If we are entitled to conceive nature as a realm of ends, as manifesting an immanent teleology, then we have a principle, which while we must not use it as a lazy man's method of explaining the particular go of natural events, nevertheless gives us a clue to the idea that the natural order, taken as a whole, is a substructure organic to the spiritual order. Kant admits that, since the immanent teleological arrangements of nature are imperfect, we have not the right to conclude that nature as we know it is the perfectly responsive instrument of a spiritual principle. Nevertheless he holds that the living organism transcends the categories of blind mechanism. The principle of the whole prevades all the parts and the parts have an interdependence, such as the parts of a mere machine do not have. Kant is a vitalist.

Furthermore, in our aesthetic and practical relations to nature, we really cannot help presupposing an ultimate kinship of nature with the human spirit—a kinship in which spirit is the higher term. And in the consideration of the work of the genius, the seer, the creative artist, we are given hints as to the possible working of an Intuitive Intelligence the objects of whose intuitions are the spontaneous expressions of his dynamic creativity.

With the utmost pains, slowly and pertinaciously, the isolated pedantic and physically frail sage of Koenigsberg pursued his self-imposed task of finding a rational interpretation of nature, the human spirit and their interrela-



tionships; an interpretation which, without the slightest concession to superstition, traditionalism, or obscurantism and with no appeal to crude passion or cheap utility would at once enfranchise the intellect of man, exalt his conscience and quicken his will to realize that which is above price—rational, just, duty-regarding personality.

When we consider his physical weakness, the conditions under which he labored, his achievements, his nobility of soul, Kant is a witness, *in propria persona*, to the philosophy he sought to found—an *idealism of values* which gives the fullest range to the free intellect, while holding that reason is most truly free and at home with itself when it serves the perfecting of moral individuality. In its net result of his philosophy in an *axiological idealism*, not a psychologistic "*idea-ism*." The soul of Kant is best expressed in his own words. "I am by disposition an enquirer. I feel the consuming thirst for knowledge, the eager unrest to advance ever further, and the delights of discovery. There was a time when I believed that this is what confers real dignity upon human life, and I despised the common people who know nothing. Rousseau has set me right. This imagined advantage vanishes. I learn to honor men, and should regard myself as of much less use than the common laborer, if I did not believe that my philosophy will restore to all men the common rights of humanity."<sup>7</sup> One may paraphrase Pascal and say that Kant is one of our chief witnesses to the validity of the principle that in the universe there is nothing great but man and in man there is nothing great but mind. In this sense, Kant is a modern Plato, a refounder of ethical idealism, an idealism that recognizes the reality and place of physical nature. An idealism that is neither moonshiny nor tender-minded; nay rather an idealism which is genuinely tough-minded and is able to face the harsh facts of

<sup>7</sup> *Fragmente aus dem Nachlasse, Werke* (Hartenstein ed.), VIII, p. 624.

life; an idealism which is the true humanism, since it attempts no cheap and easy solution of the problem of human values and social reconstruction by exalting transient utilitarian interests and shibboleths and contemning unremitting and careful reflection.

I have time only to suggest in the briefest fashion the springs of influence that have flowed from Kant's philosophy.

In Germany, the ethical idealism of Fichte was the direct outgrowth of Kant's moral philosophy. The aesthetic idealism and humanism of Schiller and Schelling were developments from the *Critique of Judgment*. Through Fichte and Schelling and the general idealistic climate, to which Kant gave such an impetus, Hegel owed much to Kant; more, I think, than he acknowledged. The new grounding of Christian theology by Schleiermacher would not have been possible without Kant. Later, the theology of Ritschl owed even more to Kant. Schopenhauer's metaphysics of the will starts from Kant's distinction between phenomena and things-in-themselves. Lotze's emphasis on value-judgments and personality is largely a return to the spirit of Kant's ethics, in reaction from the soaring extravagances of Hegel and his submergence of personality to the march of impersonal Reason. Liebmann, after the temporary eclipse of idealism in Germany, led the return to Kant. The large and flourishing Marburg school, led by Cohen and Natorp and with which is affiliated Cassirer, claims to embody the spirit of Kant's philosophy. The value-philosophy of Windelband, Rickert, Muensterberg and others, owes much to Kant. Eucken's ethico-religious idealism has a deep kinship with Kant, and with Fichte's rendering of Kant. In Husserl and his school, one can easily trace the influence of Kant.

In France I will mention only the most prominent recent thinkers who exhibit markedly the influence of Kant

—Renouvier, Ravaisson, Boutroux. Kant has had a great influence on Italian philosophy, both positivistic and idealistic.

The Kantian philosophy, in a seriously misunderstood form, it is true, was first made known to a wide circle of English readers, by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Coleridge seems to have read Kant with neo-Platonic eyes and Schellingian spectacles, but he did arouse some interest in Kant. Then Carlyle reproduced the Fichtean version of Kant's moral philosophy. I think it possible that, through Coleridge, Wordsworth was influenced by Kant. Sir William Hamilton at Edinburgh and Dean Mansel at Oxford gave currency to the agnostic aspect of Kant's theory of knowledge and through them it became the key-note in the prelude to Herbert Spencer's ponderous Synthetic Philosophy. Hutchison Sterling produced the first worthwhile works on Kant and Hegel. The work of T. H. Green, R. L. Nettleship, William Wallace, Edward Caird cannot be understood without Kant. More indirectly through Green and Hegel one can trace the influence of Kant in the work of Bosanquet and Bradley. Adamson's work starts from Kant and Fichte. James Ward and his school are more directly in line with Kant than the Oxford idealists. Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison, John Watson, J. S. Mackenzie, Henry Jones, A. E. Taylor, G. Dawes Hicks, J. H. Muirhead, are selections from a larger list of British philosophers who show, in one way or another, Kantian influence. One can trace it even in S. Alexander's realism. In America Kant's influence is marked in the writing of George H. Howison, Josiah Royce, J. G. Schurman, J. E. Creighton, John Dewey, R. M. Wenley, Frank Thilly, G. T. Ladd, A. O. Lovejoy and many others. Within the last few years Hans Vaihinger's positivistic idealistic version of Kantianism in his "*Philosophy of the As If*" has been a best seller in Germany and risen to the

dignity of a school possessing a journalistic organ. Obviously the idealistic, or rather "idea-istic," positivisms of Poincaré, Mach, Pearson, and others, as well as the pragmatism or instrumentalism of Dewey, Schiller and their disciples have affinities with Vaihinger's philosophy.

Thus, the seeds sown by Kant are still bearing fruits, good, bad and indifferent. Nearly every seriously systematic thinker finds his pet views adumbrated in Kant.

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THE RELIGION OF IMMANUEL KANT



## THE RELIGION OF IMMANUEL KANT

**I**T IS a significant fact that in this two hundredth year after his birth, the influence of Kant in every field of philosophy is intensely alive. Many current discussions in the domain of religion turn upon questions which he formulated and perhaps thought he had settled. He regarded himself as a revolutionist in thought, and at least did state problems in forms which were arresting and persistent. He specifically compared the novelty of his views of knowledge to the epoch-making discovery of Copernicus. His revolution consisted in holding that the mind gives structure and laws to objects in space and time rather than deriving ideas from objects. Did he achieve a similar revolution in the treatment of religion?

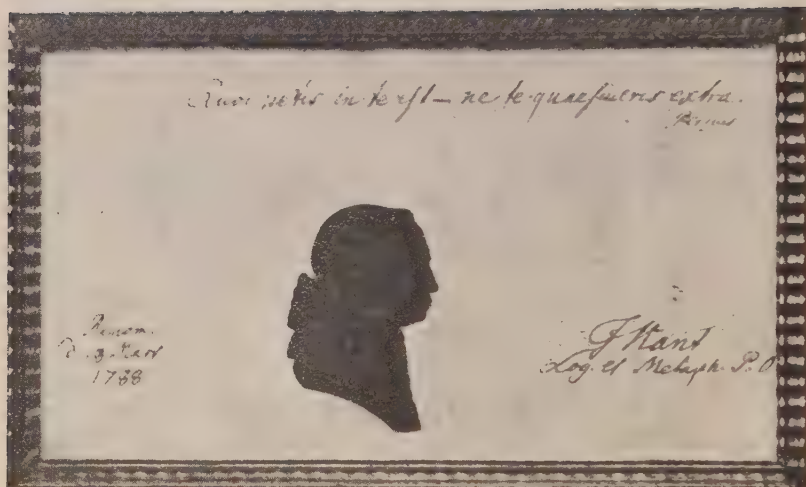
He did indeed take up the question which continues more than any other to be the center of interest, namely, the relation of science and religion. Many think he cut the knot instead of untying it, for his solution was to separate more sharply and completely and with keener instruments of dialectic the realm of science and the realm of religion. To science he allotted the field of sensuous experience. Whatever we can see, touch, and measure belongs to the physical world, but God, freedom, and immortality are not visible or tangible and therefore belong to the supersensuous sphere of spiritual things. He explicitly said: "I had to remove knowledge [from any claim to deal with God, freedom, and immortality], in order to make room for [their substantiation by] faith." In itself, that conception



was not new. It was the old contention of the mystics and the advocates of the "double truth." But Kant put the whole matter in a new technique and elaborated the limitation of knowledge to this present world. So far as science is concerned, his contribution lay in a new and far more rigorous negation of the claims of knowledge in matters of religion. He exposed the fallacies in the traditional arguments for the being of God, for the existence of the soul, and for its freedom. Those arguments have never recovered from his devastating work.

But for Kant, that destructive exposure of the claims of the understanding was only a preliminary step in clearing the way to what he regarded as a far more impressive substantiation of the fundamental things of religion. It was his purpose to show that religion belongs to a higher realm of faith. Above the bounds of reason and independent of it, rises the region of the spirit, secure from any intrusion of the earthbound senses and natural science. It was a sheer dualism, dividing man's life into utterly alien levels, so far at least as any scientific demonstration could reach. One reason Kant remains such a lively figure in the thought-world of the present time is that many scientists and many religionists alike would gladly accept such a simplification of their problems and yet are haunted by an unconquerable suspicion that it is fallacious and untrue. But all who have set their heads to the task know that the ghost of Kant's figure holding apart the heavens and the earth will not down until his work is met by some scientific philosophy of equal strength and magnitude. We therefore still have mechanists and vitalists, materialists and spiritualists, "pure" scientists and idealists, wondering whether or no they have anything in common and what it may be. Now and then there are scientists vigorously adopting the claims of religion and religionists devoutly insisting that they are scientific, but none of them has yet succeeded in





LEAF FROM AN AUTOGRAPH ALBUM PRESENTING IN KANT'S OWN  
HAND A QUOTATION FROM PERSIUS

*Quod petis in te est—ne te quaesiveris*

(What you seek is within you; search not for yourself without)

making Kant appear merely as a thinker of the past and not a contemporary.

Besides this question of the relation of knowledge and faith, a second feature of Kant's religion which makes him a living force twelve decades after his death is his identification of religion with the realm of values. In other words, religion for him was something a man lived and did not merely think about. Living comes first, both in time and in importance, even with the man often credited with being the greatest thinker of modern times. Kant was the child of a pietistic home, and religion reigned in that home in the midst of poverty and with little or no aid from worldly learning. He forever afterward had that plain fact before him. He had felt the power and value of religion as an inner, spiritual life under circumstances which revealed its independence of earthly wisdom. It was always bound up with moral ideals, and its true task was to move the will to their fulfilment. This world of values remained in all his thinking the supreme realm of life, and devotion to it was man's chief end and glory. Through these values he found assurance of the realities of religion in a manner and in a degree which far surpassed any "proofs" of science or any evidence of the senses. For Kant there was a clearness and impressiveness about these realities which made them as convincing as his own consciousness of himself. He *lived* them. The key to that world of value was the sense of duty, the "ought." He meant by that just what every plain man feels when he recognizes the obligation to be honest, or truthful, or generous. The voice of duty, uttering itself in all men, proclaims the reality and the authority of the divine will without the mediation of scientific reasoning or empirical discipline; and this divine will is one and the same with the pure, rational will of man himself. This pure, moral law speaks with a categorical imperative which betokens its source in the supersensuous



realm. All worldly wisdom is cloyed with hesitating, empirical, prudential attitudes, but this voice commands without qualification or consideration of consequences. In contemplating this majestic, commanding sense of duty, Kant rises to the most eloquent passages in all his writings, and the fervor of them in the midst of his rigorous, heavy prose is itself evidence of the profound conviction expressed. "Duty! Thou sublime and mighty name that dost embrace nothing charming or insinuating, but requirest submission, . . . what origin is there worthy of thee?" Another passage emphasizes the obviousness as well as the sublimity of the inner law:

"Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and the more steadily we reflect on them: *the starry heavens above and the moral law within*. I have not to search for them and conjecture them as though they were veiled in darkness or were in the transcendent region beyond my horizon; I see them before me and connect them directly with the consciousness of my existence."

The significance of this universal, innate moral law for religion is that it affords both the basis of assurance and the ends of religious endeavor. The existence of this voice of duty is the guaranty that man is free to obey it. Otherwise the very feeling of obligation would be illusory and worse than meaningless. Thus the freedom of the will, which baffles all theoretical proof, appears intuitively as an implication of the will itself. But human nature is finite and can only gradually fulfil the mandates of the moral law. Since the law requires perfect realization, finite man may only achieve it in an infinite time. The sense of duty justifies, then, the hope of immortality, because it is only in view of his being immortal that there is any consistency in laying the obligations of this law upon man. Kant thus validates the second of the three great elements of religion.

The third quest is for God. That, too, is satisfied through the moral law. God is demanded in the final awards. Man cannot determine what the just deserts are in the conduct of life. In this world, selfish and evil men seem sometimes to gain happiness and good men to receive misfortune and suffering. In a fair accounting, the good should attain happiness, but this requires an infinitely wise and powerful Ruler, or God. Here, then, in the superscientific order, as implications of the feeling of duty, are found the great terms of religion. They are not proved, or inferred, or logically demonstrated. They are more immediately given than by any process of reasoning.

In this procedure Kant again comes into a vital issue of modern thought. Religious minds recognize increasingly that religion is not dependent upon science for its faith, but they do not so readily accept Kant's method. Too much has been found out about the empirical character of morality. It contains a large admixture of custom, of folkways and mores, of education, and of trial and error. Conscience speaks different things to men of various cultures, whenever concrete action is required. The faiths of men have begotten a vast variety of gods. But religion lives on and continues to play an important rôle in the most developed civilizations. It is bound up with all reflections on this world as well as the next. The reverence and piety of Kant answer to something deep and genuine in all human experience, but his earnest endeavor to show that religion is something inaccessible to ordinary thought attains only a seeming success by his use of non-scientific terms in discussing the subject.

This fact appears in his treatment of a third set of problems, in which he freely declares that religious history and dogma belong to the realm of symbols and then proceeds to justify their use within the limits of reason. This may prove to be one of his most fruitful insights and one of his

most quickening influences in present and future developments of religion. In his elaboration of the implications of the moral law, while he speaks of God, freedom, and immortality, it is with very constant insistence that these words do not connote objects or realities as understood by the literally minded. They are all beyond the comprehension of matter-of-fact thinking. They are poetic, figurative. But they are not therefore without meaning or value. It is just because religion deals with such intimate and profound experiences that it overflows the measures of the common use of words. The value of religion is in its ethical significance, in its power over the will. Therefore it justly employs appealing symbolism. For Kant, all the events described in the Bible as historical have their real significance as vivid pictures of the inner spiritual struggles and achievements in the hearts of men. Satan signifies the bad tendency. Christ signifies the good. Between them is a warfare, by victory in which Christ renders the atonement. To believe in Christ is to believe in and seek to realize in one's self the ideal nature which was in him and is in us. A church is a community of souls aiding each other by example, comfort, and encouragement to attain that ideal. It is a helpful institution so long as man needs such support in living the good life, and that probably will be a much longer time than Kant thought. The ceremonies of public service have worth insofar as they helpfully present the great ethical ends of life and the means to their realization. They are symbolic presentations of the living drama of man's moral struggle. All sacred books have their worth through their use of the dramatic and poetic story of this inner life. The key to everything is to be found in our own spirits, and therefore the imposition of external dogmas or traditions is the death of religion. In a certain sense, Kant is committed to an esoteric interpretation, but he escapes the evil of esotericism by proclaim-

ing how everyone may enter into the inner circle, namely, by realizing the nature of the religious drama and accepting it as such. He further suggests that religious ideas and ceremonials undergo a process of change and growth in the direction of greater consistency with the prevailing culture of a people. Theologians must be free as scholars to investigate and restate the faith; as preachers, they may utilize the sacred books and all ceremonials as poetic and dramatic symbols for the advancement of the ethical life. Religion is thus brought into the field of art, where an increasing number of churchmen as well as scholars feel it to be most at home.

It is interesting in this connection to reflect that the three aspects of Kant's religion touched upon are so much reflected in the poetry of the nineteenth century. Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Tennyson voiced his limitations of knowledge, his reverence for the moral law, and his appreciation of symbolism. All of these are illustrated in four familiar lines of Tennyson:

Strong Son of God, immortal Love,  
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,  
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,  
Believing where we cannot prove.

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KANT AS A STUDENT OF NATURAL SCIENCE



## KANT AS A STUDENT OF NATURAL SCIENCE

THROUGHOUT a long career as thinker and teacher, Immanuel Kant was guided and informed by the dominant interests of the philosopher and metaphysician. He was also, especially during the earlier half of his life, an eager and thoughtful reader of the literature of the mathematical and physical sciences. The mere titles of his writings during this period indicate clearly the scientific direction of his mind. Among eighteen essays and short studies produced before his fortieth year, eleven are discussions of a strictly scientific subject-matter; and in several of these essays there are advanced ideas and hypotheses of noteworthy originality and permanent value. Kant himself, to be sure, never engaged in experimental investigations in the field of science, although he was interested in the results and methods of experimental research. It would be pertinent to raise the question—which, however, this occasion furnishes no opportunity to discuss—as to just how intimate may have been Kant's acquaintance with the details of the actual experimental procedure of his day. On this occasion, perhaps, it is more to the point to lay stress upon the fact—easily missed by those whose knowledge of Kant has not progressed beyond the stage of reading *about*, rather than *in*, him—that although Kant came eventually to teach that the ultimate validity of natural science is guaranteed only by certain principles which he held to be *a priori*, i. e., independent as regards their proof

of any observations of fact, he none the less and quite consistently therewith insisted upon the empirical method as indispensable in any scientific study of the realm of nature. The distinguished physicist, Helmholtz, in his Heidelberg address of 1871 declared: "The Kant of early life was a natural philosopher by instinct and by inclination; and . . . probably only the power of external circumstances, the want of means necessary for independent scientific research, and the tone of thought prevalent at the time, kept him to philosophy. . . . It is exactly an inversion of the historical connection, when Kant's name is occasionally misused, to recommend that natural philosophy shall leave the inductive method, by which it has become great, to revert to the windy speculations of a so-called 'deductive method.' No one would have attacked such a misuse, more energetically and more incisively, than Kant himself if he were still among us." <sup>1</sup> One may well doubt whether Kant was "by instinct and by inclination" a natural scientist. But one welcomes this scientist's recognition that there is nothing in the spirit of Kant's philosophy, with all of its stress upon the *a priori* foundations of natural science, opposed to the empirical procedure in the study of nature.

Kant's scientific interests constituted a vital factor in his philosophical development. The fact that, during the earlier half of his life, Kant's thoughts were directed toward the phenomena of the physical universe and toward man's efforts to achieve, through mathematics, a true science of nature, determined to a very great extent the character of the whole Kantian philosophy. The book which stands as the greatest single work of his philosophical genius—the *Critique of Pure Reason*—was published, as is well known, only when Kant had attained to his fifty-seventh year. It was, from more than one point of view,

<sup>1</sup> *Popular Lectures on Scientific Subjects* (trans. E. Atkinson), London, 1881. Second Series, p. 141f.

the outcome of the author's long preoccupation with the methods and results of mathematical physics. The *Critique of Pure Reason* has, indeed, been subjected to an amazing variety of interpretations, both as regards its doctrinal content and as regards its place in the total perspective of Kant's whole system as well as in the larger perspective of modern philosophy as a whole. But at least one significant fact, as regards the motivation of the work, is beyond differences of opinion. Kant had become poignantly aware of the contrast between the sure and steady advance of men's knowledge in the fields of mathematics and physics on the one hand and the apparent failures of historical metaphysics on the other. To attain to a thorough understanding of the factors and causes determining this contrast was the avowed aim of the first *Critique*. May not, Kant asks—nay *must* not—the philosopher and metaphysician learn wisdom from those enterprises which have advanced so much further along a secure pathway of progress? Hence, of course, those three famous Kantian questions, whose complete answer is the *Critique of Pure Reason*: (1) *How* is mathematics as a science possible? (2) *How* is physics as a science possible? and (3) *Is* metaphysics as a science possible, and if so, *how*? The *Critique of Pure Reason* was, in its avowed aim, unmistakably a treatise on the philosophy of science. Any discussion, however, of this philosophy of science lies perforce beyond the limits of the present undertaking. In these remarks, addressed as they are, primarily to those who have previously made little or no study of Kant, and limited to a short period of twenty-five minutes, we can scarcely do more than touch briefly on the early scientific essays, hoping to suggest something of their general character and significance for science.

Kant's earliest published work was an essay, written in 1746 at the close of his student days at Koenigsberg,



entitled *Thoughts on the true Evaluation of living Force*. It was a discussion of a topic that had been subject of controversy among physicists for more than fifty years, viz., the correct definition of the measure of force (*vis viva*). At the present time it has become entirely evident—as indeed it had become to D'Alembert three years before Kant wrote—that the issue rested upon various misunderstandings which rendered the dispute to a considerable extent a verbal one. Inasmuch as the youthful Kant of twenty-two years failed to discern this, his first scientific writing possesses practically no scientific value today—although it contains several matters of interest to a Kantian biographer.

It is well known that Kant's interest in mathematical physics had been stimulated during his student days chiefly by his philosophy professor, Martin Knutzen. It was at the latter's instigation, and under his guidance, that Kant began the careful study of Newton's *Principia*, which soon opened up to him a wholly new conception of the material universe and henceforth shaped his ideals of scientific knowledge. The fruits of this study of Newton began to appear about eight years after the first essay just referred to. The Royal Academy of Sciences in Berlin had proposed a prize question for the year 1754 as follows: *Has the Rotation of the Earth which produces the Alternation of Day and Night undergone any Change since the Time of its Origin? If so, What is the Cause, and how can the fact be established?* The proposal of this question prompted Kant to publish in a weekly Koenigsberg review two closely related studies entitled: *A Consideration of the Question whether the Earth has undergone any Alteration of its Axial Rotation*, and *The Question whether the Earth grows old, physically considered*.

In the latter of the two essays Kant discussed the various agencies whereby changes in the condition and struc-

ture of the earth are brought about, and introduced in a very few words the conception of base-levelling, now familiar enough to geological students. He wrote: "In respect to change of the earth's shape there remains to be discussed a single cause which can be counted upon with certainty; it consists in the fact that the rain and streams continually attack the land and sluice it down from the highlands to the lowlands, gradually making the elevations into plains and, so far as in them lies, strive to rob the globe of its inequalities. This action is certain and no matter of opinion. The land is subject to this action so long as there is material on the declivities which can be attacked and transported by rain water."<sup>2</sup> Of greater interest is the earlier of the two essays in which for the first time the hypothesis was enunciated that the earth's rotation on its axis is retarded by the tides. Of Kant's scientific contribution here, Lord Kelvin wrote in 1897 as follows: "Kant pointed out in the middle of the last century what had not previously been discovered by mathematicians or physical astronomers, that the frictional resistance against tidal currents on the earth's surface must cause a diminution of the earth's rotational speed. This really great discovery in natural philosophy seems to have attracted very little attention—indeed to have passed quite unnoticed—among mathematicians . . . until 1840, when the doctrine of energy began to be taken to heart." Kant not only asserted that the earth's rotation is retarded, but also attempted—though from quite insufficient data—a computation of the rate of the retardation. This latter, as more recent calculations have shown, Kant grossly overestimated. The earth's rotation was arrived at by Kant deductively, not however as a final "conclusion" but as an hypothesis to be tested. Kant himself confessed that he knew of no empirical facts, or historical evidence, which could

<sup>2</sup> *Kant's Schriften* (Edition of the Prussian Academy of Sciences), Vol. I, p. 209.

show that the retardation actually had taken place. It was, seemingly, his awareness that he had no sufficient empirical proof of this specific hypothesis that prevented him from submitting his essay for the prize offered by the Academy. But, as Lord Kelvin so clearly confesses, it was no small achievement to have seen for the first time this implication of established mechanical principles.

In the winter of 1755 Kant entered upon his teaching in the University at Koenigsberg. The subjects of his lectures included the several philosophical disciplines; but he lectured also on Mathematics, Mechanics, Theoretical Physics, Physical Geography, and—starting at a somewhat later date—Anthropology. His lectures on Physical Geography appear to have been favorites with Kant and his auditors alike, and the course was continued throughout the forty years of Kant's teaching in the University. In 1756 he published a monograph and two essays on the phenomena of the Lisbon earthquake of the preceding year. Another work of the same year, also indicative of Kant's interest in geography, was entitled *New Remarks in Explanation of the Theory of the Winds*. His argument here seems to have been directed against D'Alembert, who ten years before had sought to account for atmospheric currents as the immediate result of the attraction of the sun and moon. Kant appeals to the rotation of the earth on its axis as the important factor in determining the direction of the periodical winds, the monsoons and trade-winds.

Passing by the other minor writings of this period, let us briefly consider the work of which so far no mention has been made, but which more than any other seems to give Kant an assured place in the history of natural science, viz., the *Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*. This was Kant's most striking adventure into the realm of scientific hypothesis, and reveals most distinctly the effects of his studies of Newton. In the essay on the earth's re-

tardation by the tides, Kant had included, quite incidentally, a most original explanation of the fact that the moon always presents its same face to the earth. The moon, he said, had been originally in a fluid state. The tides produced in it by the earth had retarded its rotation until now its period of rotation coincides with the period of its revolution about the earth. He went on further to predict that the earth's rotation would continue to be retarded until its period would be the same as that of the moon's revolution. Thereupon the earth would continue to present its same side to the moon and the moon would then appear to an observer upon the earth to be stationary. But Kant concluded the essay by saying: "This hypothesis is all of a piece with a comprehensive theory of the universe which I am about to publish under the title: *Cosmogony, or an Attempt to derive the Origin of the World, the Constitution of the Heavenly Bodies, and the Causes of their Motions from the Universal Laws of the Motion of Matter, according to the Theory of Newton*.<sup>3</sup>

The work which was thus announced appeared in 1755 with the altered title: *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*, published, however, without the author's name. It is difficult to understand why it should have been published anonymously inasmuch as Kant had already heralded its publication; nor did its authorship long remain unknown, for the work was listed under Kant's name in an advertisement of a Koenigsberg bookseller in the following year. The *History and Theory of the Heavens*, however, suffered an untoward fate. Except for a brief notice in a Hamburg journal, it attracted almost no attention at the time. Despite Kant's later references to it, and an abridgement of it later published under Kant's supervision, it was practically lost to the sight of the scientific world for almost a century. Attention having been re-

<sup>3</sup> *Kant's Schriften* (Edition of the Prussian Academy of Science), Vol. I, p. 191.



called to it by the French astronomer, Arago, in 1842, its merits came gradually to be recognized on the continent. In England reference to it seems to have been made first by De Morgan in 1848, and at greater length and more appreciatively by Thomas Huxley and Lord Kelvin in 1869. Thus tardily was it recognized that Kant had in many striking essentials anticipated the conception, or theory, of the origin of the solar system which Laplace, forty-one years after Kant, had developed with greater brevity and mathematical nicety and designated the "Nebular Hypothesis."

The awe which Kant confessed—in an oft-quoted passage of the *Critique of Practical Reason*—ever to have felt in the presence of the universe of the starry heavens, dated back at least to his early school days before the university, when his favorite Latin author, Lucretius, fascinated his imagination with the poetry of the infinite atomic worlds. More recently his study of Newton had supplied him with an entirely different conception of mechanics than that upon which Lucretius had relied in his *De rerum natura*. There was now added to the still present awe at the majesty of the starry heavens a new wonderment at the potency of mathematical physics. At the opening of the famous seventh chapter of the second part of the *History*, Kant wrote: "The universe by its immeasurable extent, and the infinite diversity and beauty it in every direction displays reduces us to silent wonder. If the presentation of all this moves the imagination, the understanding is seized with a different rapture when it considers . . . that such magnificence and such greatness, all flow from a single law, with eternal and perfect order." <sup>4</sup>

With sober scientific caution, Newton had formulated his gravitational theory with reference only to the present movements of the solar system. Within these limits his

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 306.



mathematical deductions could receive their empirical verification. His theory had included no explanation of the axial rotation of the planets and their satellites, nor of the original tangential impetus of their revolutions. So far as the scientific theory of Newton was concerned, these might still be referred devoutly to the originating activity of the Deity. Kant's concern was now with the *origin* of the present order of the universe. A scientific explanation of this need not destroy one's piety; a natural effect such as the now existing planetary system must have its natural causes. Indeed, in the *Introduction* to the *History*, Kant was careful to point out that if it could be made out that such an orderly universe as ours has evolved through the mere working of the natural laws of matter, this would in itself be a powerful argument in support of Theism rather than the reverse. And so later, in his work on *The Only Possible Proof of the Existence of God*, he directed the attention of his readers again to this earlier work on cosmology. His scientific imagination having, then, in his early years been made, with Lucretius, the spectator of all time, Kant now undertakes the ideal experiment of a similarly comprehensive view of the process of the world's genesis through the more modern glasses provided by Newton. "I accept," he writes,<sup>5</sup> "the matter of the whole world as in a state of dispersion in the beginning and make of it a complete chaos. I observe this matter shaping itself in accordance with the established laws of attraction, and modifying its movement by repulsion. Without having recourse to arbitrary hypotheses, I enjoy the pleasure of observing a well ordered universe produced under the regulation of the established laws of motion, and this universe looks so like the system of the world that we see before our eyes, that I cannot refuse to identify it with it."

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225f.

Let not the two brief rapturous passages just quoted create a false impression of the character of the *History*. For the greater part it consists of quite sober and substantial argument. It brings together and analyzes an impressive array of facts for the purpose of showing that the principles of the Newtonian mechanics are adequate to explain the origin of the existing order, not only within the solar system but throughout the entire sidereal universe. Kant at points, certainly, permits himself excursions into the fascinating realm of pure conjecture, as when, e. g., he speculates upon the inhabitants of other planets, or upon the destiny of an immortal soul in this Newtonian universe. But for all that, he is not oblivious of the boundaries which separate the realm where fancy may play and the realm of scientifically verifiable fact. Kant's cosmogonical hypothesis differed in some striking respects from the later Laplacean theory. Kant assumed, e. g., that the nebulous matter from which the process of genesis begins was cold and without rotary motion, while Laplace started with a heated, rotating nebula. It was at a considerably later date that Kant became acquainted with the experiments of Crawford on the development of heat through the compression of gases, which would have enabled him to supplement in an important way his theory as to the origin of the heat of the sun and the planets.

One of the most serious errors in Kant's speculations in this field was inevitable until the later developments of thermo-dynamics. For Kant supposed that, in consequence of the retardation of their motions, all of the planets must eventually in the remote future fall into the sun. The heat which would be thus generated in the central mass would, he thought, be sufficient to dissociate the matter of the system and restore it to its original nebulous state. Thereupon would recommence a fresh cycle of cosmic evolution, and so on worlds without end. This part of the theory, by

making of the material universe a perpetual motion machine, is of course incompatible with the now accepted second law of thermo-dynamics. Numerous other defects in the details of Kant's cosmogony have frequently enough been pointed out. It seems more useful, however, to insist upon the novel and positive character of its achievement, in extending the Newtonian principles, exemplified and verified by the present movements of the planetary system to the interpretation of the process whereby the system itself has evolved and come into being.

The English translator of Kant's *Natural History of the Heavens*, in his Introduction, writes: "This work will probably be regarded hereafter as the most wonderful and enduring product of Kant's genius." Few students of Kant, I suspect, would agree with Mr. Hastie's exaggerated estimate of this work. Without derogating from the merits of Kant's *History*, one may assert that the most remarkable evidences of Kant's genius are rather to be sought in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, together, perhaps, with the two later *Critiques*. Kant's genius was that of the philosopher. Yet as little, I think, should one accept the statement of Professor Paulsen in his excellent volume, *Immanuel Kant*. Paulsen writes: "If Kant had died at the same age as Spinoza, Descartes, Lessing, or Schiller, his name would scarcely be heard at the present time."<sup>6</sup> This seems to mean that Kant's reputation could be secured by no work prior to the *Critique of Pure Reason*; and if, as the context appears to suggest, the remark is intended as an estimate of the merits of Kant's pre-critical writings, it is scarcely judicial. Kant's early scientific essays were surely sufficient to secure him a permanent place in the history of science—although, indeed, that might not mean that his name would be frequently heard at the present day.

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<sup>6</sup> *Immanuel Kant* (trans. Creighton and Lefevre), p. 66.



KANT'S PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION





## KANT'S PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

TO OBTAIN an insight into the bearing of Kant's conception of religion it is necessary to recall a few of the essentials of *real* religion and some of the deeper impulses by which it appears to be motivated; also to separate from these deeper trends many false conceptions that are widely entertained.

### RELIGION IN GENERAL

Religion is *not* "an imaginative echo of things natural and moral." It is not to be identified with an insidious poetic affirmation of compensations that really are absent in the universe. It is not to be identified with primitive false interpretations of the world and life. Men who believe in progress, who trust the truth and beneficence of science, often inconsistently relegate the term religion to the primitive faiths of the other fellow.

However much religions of the past have been steeped in symbolism, ambiguous proofs by analogy of the realities for which man's childish heart has longed; however much religions of the past have been controlled by superstitious rites and ceremonials, magic, occultism and fetish worship, religion in its complete form is no more to be identified with these things than is scientific knowledge to be confined to the childish lisps of man's first attempts at knowledge. Indeed, there is no more reason for supposing magic, occultism, spiritism to be forms of early relig-

ious phenomena than to be forms of early science. Religion is not to be identified with spiritism nor with a belief in a two-world supernaturalism or in the essential contingency of the relation of God and nature.

It is indeed a pathetic conception of religion too common in popular thought that would tie it to the miraculous events of life, confine it to external authoritarianism, assume it must necessarily be conservative, conceive it to be a worship of mystery, reduce it to the dumb awesomeness of life, or in other ways ostracize the scientific spirit from the heart of modern religious endeavor. Science seeks clearness, not mystery; law, not chance; intelligence, not dumbness; open-mindedness, not solidifying conservatism; critical, individual verification, not authoritarianism. But nothing of the scientific temper or the true, scientific spirit of critical observation, creativeness, and verification is foreign to modern religion. Indeed, modern scientific creativeness, beginning in the seventeenth century, is one of the greatest expressions of religious life; comparable with it, the Reformation and the rise of western institutional religion are as nothing.

Religion is devotion to superlative values expressed as organic in a cosmic order. The religious view therefore necessarily stresses the fact and great importance of the realm of value and interprets reality in terms of value as well as in terms of relatively non-value facts.

However, religion is never satisfied merely to affirm value. It interprets life and being in terms of an hierarchical order. Values for religion cannot all be equal and they cannot be accepted as through and through illusions. However much men adopt fleeting, evanescent and contradictory loyalties, the profounder religious attitude holds that for any religion, whether relative or absolute, there must be an aristocracy of values, there must be superlative goods in reference to the largest whole of fact,

the cosmos, and in reference to every part thereof that has an organized preciousness.

Hence, religion affirms that there is a superlative good for each individual and for society in the realm of the theoretically possible, and that it is the duty of each truly religious person to endeavor to find it. Rejecting the absolute equality of all values it affirms the great importance and the profound fact of the real as involving a contrast between the higher and the inferior. Hence the meaning of God, of divinity, of holiness, of sacredness, of spirituality, of the preciousness of the true, the good and the beautiful. Hence the importance to religion of the idealistic urge and its antagonism to all forms of materialism and reductionism. Hence the emphasis on purpose, finality and personality. Hence its sensitiveness to sin, failure, and defeat and its great teachings as to the ways of redemption and of salvation. Hence its emphasis on the ways of reaching superlative satisfaction; for the religious aim of life is appreciation of the Most High. The ways by which men may attain such salvation are marvelously diverse and wonderfully rich. They are all functions of world conceptions, the experimental trials of life, and the particular values that men choose to be supreme.

Different conceptions of the world's structure produce different forms of superlative outlook. For instance, the religions of mysticism and their stress on immanent unity; deism and its externalism; theism and its attempt to interpret the world as an order of continuous contrast with a supreme personality; or again, the religion of Epicurean comfort, of Stoic enurement, or the cramped subjective idealism of a naturalism that sees in outward nature only an indifferentism to man's cherished hopes, that forces man to find peace in the inward depths of his own fanciful creation; or, finally, the materialism that confines satisfaction to mere physical well-being, bodily health, nutrition

and sanitation, because man is conceived to be a piece of the earth or is represented to be in the pitiable plight of struggling helplessly in the web of physical causation. Thus, all values are shaped by the contours of cosmic meaning. As we said, religion is devotion to superlative values, but values set in a cosmic meaning. And these values alter in shape and form like the placid waters that meander with the rambling shore line or twist and bend with the obtruding promontories and the changing continents.

At this point it might be well to make a fundamental distinction between what we may call "great" religion and "cramped" religion. Just as we may divide all ethical codes and systems, whether popular or philosophical, into two classes, namely universal and group ethics, or humanitarian and individual in distinction from tribal and national ethics—so we may divide religious aspiration into two forms. On the one hand, we find religions that conceive unity to transcend all differences between value and fact anywhere, that emphasize universality and an absolute sufficiency that is perfect, that conceive all relations as ultimately internal, that affirm the immanent unity of all fact and hence are driven to see the world in terms of an organic unity of all the categories, a universal intelligence or an absolute whole, and that conceive the problem of evil to be the problem of harmonizing an external relatedness with an ultimate internality of relations, or of conceiving every evil as a two-phase situation, absolute and relative. Here the problem of evil is solved when we come to see the immanent unity of the categories of facts in the large, especially of good and evil, and come to apprehend the perfect in the absolute. On the other hand, we have a second class of religions that stress the primacy of external relations, especially externalism between values and non-values or impersonal facts, and that conceive the problem of evil as essentially and ultimately a conflict of terms



in external relations. Evil and good are treated as dualistic even though they are said to be in an otherwise organic world—a world interpreted sometimes impersonally, sometimes personally. Hence the problem of evil is solved only by the victory of one term and the elimination of the other. The former may be called great religion, the latter cramped religion. To the latter class belong the highly specialized superlatives at which men often grasp because thought has driven them up some blind alley of the labyrinths of existence or because thought has squeezed life so tightly that it sees the light of hope only through a crevice between the canyon walls above. All such are genuine expressions of religion. For the religions of man are not confined to some six or a score of national world sects. The religions of life are as the sands of the sea.

Some of the many forms of cramped religious life are revealed in the following values that express to man the superlatives in life or serve as beacon lights in the ordering of human activities. Thus, some men find the great satisfactions of life in preoccupation with the world as it *is* rather than with what one might *desire* it *to be*, or think it *ought to be*. In other words, they have a preference for the ideal of the *is* over that of the *ought to be*, so loved by Kant. This attitude is a form of restricted religious motivation. Not every one has admired the starry heavens above nor the moral law within, and it is just such facts that are profoundly important to religion. Religion must take up into itself just such antithetical admirations. Or, again, we may note the superlative satisfaction that some men have in the cold truth of disillusionment even though this means an absolute reversal of human hopes; the joy some men find in irony, in scintillating negativity, in the shock of expressed ennui with what is commonly taken for goodness, as witnessed in Mencken; with uplift, good people, prohibition, Rotary and Kiwanis and Y. M. C. A.

boostings. Or, again, we might refer to the supreme satisfaction some persons obtain from hugging illusions, errors, and fancy so long as they bring comfort, because truth and goodness are believed not to be *one* but the world is supposed to be a solid fact, alien to man's hopes for happiness and to possess a truth bitter and cold to man's tender aspirations. "If we knew all," says Anatole France, "we could not support life an hour. The sentiments which make it sweet, or at least tolerable for us, spring from a lie and nourish themselves on illusions." Or, again, the dominating satisfaction in the belief that the unreasonable is more precious than the reasonable, such that Tertullian could say that the very virtue of true belief lies in its being without the support of reason, is a form of cramped religious value. Contrary to the modern notion of the relation of faith and reason, Tertullian could glory in the thought that the man of faith renounced reason. Once more, we call attention to the supreme satisfaction certain modern minds find in the cause of truth, of truth for truth's sake, and in scientific method, so that passionately they can proclaim "belief is desecrated when given to unproved and unquestioned statements for the solace and private pleasure of the believer," or the superlative value of melancholiness of men like Schopenhauer who could say, "Happiness is childish and shallow, only misery is profound"; or, again, to the satisfaction of the optimist who thinks all melancholy and pessimism to be cowardly, bad, and utterly irrational; or, finally, to the host of cramped superlatives such as belief that salvation lies in denial or ultimate doubt of everything rather than in affirmation, trust, confidence in all things, or the glorification of the bizarre, the outrageous and meaningless in opposition to the beautiful, the harmonious and significant, or the possession by the mind of the spirit of decadence instead of the spirit of constructive up-building, or the dominant sweep of the ideas of

progress, control, utility, and responsibility instead of their opposites, or the worship of force in place of goodness, of immediacy instead of the eternal and absolute, the trust in things and mechanism in preference to persons and plans, or the glorification of necessity and the gladsome acceptance of life and fact in contrast to the spirit of stubborn rebellion and of fretful hostility toward the system of the cosmos. All these manifestations reveal the vastness of religious impulse working in the cramped alleys of cosmic interpretation.

Bosanquet's interpretation of religion belongs to that group of conceptions that might be called great religion. Kant's conception of reality and the consequent meaning of religion have affinities to both great and cramped religion.

#### MEANING OF RELIGION TO KANT AND HIS TREATMENT OF THE ONTOLOGICAL PERFECT

It has been said: "The outstanding trait of Kant's reflection upon religion is its supreme interest in morals and conduct."<sup>1</sup> Religion was profoundly real to Kant. To him religion might be said to be conduct backed by (1) belief in a just transcendent God; (2) an inspiration coming from a conviction that what ought to be is or will be realized because the reality of the ought-to-be demands a just opportunity for man to realize his duties; and (3) a consciousness of the ought and its demand for justice, responsibility and righteousness requiring an acknowledgment of freedom. In short, for Kant religion is conduct backed by belief in an ultimate ordering of justice and the ideas necessary to such. Character or morality is the end of life because character is the ultimate backing of life.

Kant would not have agreed with Hegel that religion is "the knowledge possessed by the finite mind of its nature

<sup>1</sup> Moore, *Christian Thought Since Kant*, p. 74.

as absolute mind." Kant was tinctured too much with deism to feel the force of such a statement. Nor would Kant identify religion with feeling. He would not be happy in describing it as a sense of awe for this would remove it too far from the pure universal. Says Kant, "If feeling of any sort has to be presupposed before the will can be determined, the will is not determined because of the law and therefore the action is not moral but simply legal."<sup>2</sup> Nor would Kant be satisfied with the description of religion as a trend in nature that makes for righteousness; to him nature was too mechanical, too impersonal, too phenomenal to be thus represented. Religion to Kant is an appeal of that which transcends nature. God is postulated as "a cause distinct from nature" (p. 131). Kant would not be content with Schleiermacher's interpretation of religion as the feeling, or sense, of absolute dependence, for religion to him was essentially an expression of the ethical, of the spirit of duty, justice and righteousness. He would not feel that form and ritual were of great significance to religion. Nor again would Kant affirm that religion was mainly a body of doctrines; and Kant was too much of a pietist to do so. He would hesitate at calling religion a form of experience, for the term experience had too much of the smack of the empirical. Kant's religion was not a type of cognition so much as a conviction that an ultimate universal order of righteousness or what ought to be, is, and hence will be fulfilled. God is the existential expression of the universality and the compelling force of the ought-to-be. Likewise immortality and freedom are expressions of this demand of a universal value.

Kant could say with Bosanquet that it is by religion that man attains confidence in life and comes to be "at home in the universe." But he would have meant something

<sup>2</sup> *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, Hartenstein's edition of Kant, Vol. V, p. 76. All page references in the body of this paper henceforth are to this volume.



quite different from Bosanquet. To Bosanquet the religious meaning of "at home in the universe" appears to be a more or less conscious apprehension, or an expression through a conscious faith, of the ultimate perfection and sufficiency of the whole, the perfection of the absolute. In other words, to Bosanquet this sense of religious peace, the ultimate fitness of all things, is different from the peace of Epicurean comfort, in that true religious peace comes from the higher, more intellectual apprehension of the ultimate perfection and unity of all the categories and factors of life. Bosanquet holds that this sense of unity and harmony of the perfect whole comes to be most fully realized by man only as he enters into devotion to a cause, only as he seeks oneness with a whole that transcends his limited particular self, only as he ceases to be rebellious and fretful toward the conditions of life and seeks unity through love, loyalty and friendship. Bosanquet would say, "You are made whole like unto the absolute when you give yourself to something which is supreme." By this devotion one attains not only the salvation of religious peace but gains an insight into the most high, the absolute, perfect individuality.

To Kant, on the other hand, to be "at home in the universe" does not mean that abiding sense of the perfection of the absolute or a way of life that initiates one into that insight so much as it appears to mean a sense of comfort and security that comes from the conviction that "God's in His Heaven," and He, being ethical, will back the righteousness of individual, retributive justice.

In other words, the principle at the base of religion appears to Bosanquet to be the ontological intuition; to Kant, it is the force of the conviction of a universal impelling ought, an order of righteousness in an apparently contingent order. For Kant regards the ontological argument or principle as false. He would say that man feels



himself religiously at home in the universe because of justification by faith; a faith, however, that is not a mere individual wish but an ought that takes on the character of a conviction of the universality of the principle of righteousness.

Says Kant, "it is of the moral law that we are primarily and directly conscious" (p. 31).

"This law we apprehend by thinking of maxims of the will in their form. Thus reason presents the moral law as a principle of action, which no sensuous condition can outweigh; nay as a principle which is completely independent of all sensuous conditions" (p. 31). This supreme law of pure practical reason or of righteousness, namely the admonition to "act so that the maxims of your will may be in perfect harmony with a universal system of laws," cannot be derived from any datum known by reason antecedently to it, as, for instance, the consciousness of freedom. It forces itself upon us, as an *a priori* synthetic proposition, which is independent of any perception, either pure or empirical. It cannot be verified in experience; it may be verified "only in the sense that it is the one fact of pure reason" (pp. 32-33). Kant refers to the principle of morality as "prescribing a universal law, which is independent of all subjective differences, and which serves as the supreme formal ground for the determination of the will. For this very reason that principle is a law for all rational beings which have a will. Hence it is not restricted to man, but holds for all finite beings who have reason and will, and includes even the Infinite Being as the Supreme Intelligence" (p. 34).

Further: "The moral law leads us to postulate not only the immortality of the soul, but the existence of God" (p. 130). "The highest good is capable of being realized in the world, only if there exists a supreme cause of nature

whose causality is in harmony with the moral character of the agent" (p. 132).

Thus, as these quotations bring out, Kant as well as Bosanquet feels the appeal of the principle of absolute perfection as rational and self-evident. But with Bosanquet the real self-sufficient after all can be the only final standard of perfection. The principle of coherency applied to interpreted experience alone reveals the organic perfection of the absolute. The real is not a two-world order but a harmony of the whole. The objective is not that *which is external* to the mind or idea. It is not the antithesis of subjectivity. It is not social agreement, nor sense data, nor lawful sense phenomena, nor a noumenon back of phenomena. Rather it is the absolute coherent whole. A fact is objective, whether subjective and private or an affair of objects and the public, when it is seen in its coherent setting. Feeling and value, thus, are no less objective than are physical or sense data. This position has a vital effect on religious interpretation, especially in connection with what we have called great religions. With Kant the perfect is a demand of the moral ideal, the objective reality of which "cannot be established by any appeal of theoretical reason either to speculation or to experience." The moral ideal "prescribes a universal law," that "holds for all finite beings who have reason and will, and includes even the Infinite Being" (p. 34). We ought to make the highest good, i. e., the perfect, the object of our will and we should seek to promote it with all our power. Hence the possibility of this highest good is thus implied or presupposed, also the conditions which make it possible, i. e., God, freedom, and immortality. The idea of the ought or of duty stands alone. It is an imperial demand of ethical loyalty. As an obligation it needs no support from inner or outer conditions or from the existence of God though of course it must presuppose that "the highest good is pos-

sible." This implication is the ground for the structural sufficiency and perfection of the whole, i. e., the obligation to realize the "idea of the highest good," for "it is our duty to promote the highest good." It implies the "supreme cause of nature," the supreme "intelligence and will," namely "God."

One thinker therefore appears to hold that the perfect is implied in the very nature of the complete rational whole. The other finds it implied in the duty or obligation to seek the highest good and this implies that which is necessary to realize it, namely, the existence of God. To both thinkers, real perfection is necessary to the religious ideal; and perfection is not a subjective, regulative idea nor an abstract limit nor the best in a temporary social ideal.

Both regard perfection as the great religious motivation. But to Bosanquet the perfect is the self-sufficient, the absolute whereby each particular is what it is because of the total set of factors, actual and possible; because the sufficient is a whole that includes all pastness and futurity as well as the present and all remoteness and immediacy in space; because it includes all human preciousness as well as relatively non-value facts; because existence is not a reality external to the subject as assumed by realists, nor a property of the subject, nor a quality of objects foreign to possible reals or ideas as Kant supposed was implied in the ontological argument for perfection. To argue in the manner of Kant that a hundred possible thalers has all the marks of a hundred real ones, is to miss the point of the ontological argument. Nor is existence a group of conditions supporting evanescent mind, as believed by naturalists. Existence to Bosanquet is not something that persists independent of mind, as is implied in various brands of realism, nor is it to be identified with the agnostic "thing-in-itself." Not even persistence of the self as attested by the *cogito ergo sum* of Descartes is the prime

standard of existence. Existence cannot be identified with the "is" rather than the "is not," nor with the present rather than the not present, nor with the here rather than the there, nor with the particular and so-called concrete in preference to the universal. Nor is existence a character of the fulfilled rather than the unfulfilled, nor of the static more than the changeful; nor is existence to be confined to a synoptic phase of experience. Existence is not in experience nor is experience in a realm of existence. Existence is the synoptic whole, not the synthetic fusion or collective whole, of which the parts are distinguishable yet in immanent unity with the whole.

Existence is just the most complete organic whole of all factors of reality. An existent is a setting in the supposed most complete order. Any fact is an item as it is presumed to reside in the most inclusive absolute whole.

This absolute order contains within it the complete explanation of all particular events and is the perfect unity of all categories and items of reality. Evil is disappointment and defeat of a portion of the world, but this in no way implies the imperfection of the whole. The latter involves an order of organic, transcending harmony, analogous to the triumph of truth over errors and of love in forbearance of inevitable social meanness. This perfection is not to be confused with the so-called "composition theory of evil according to which good and evil, or good and evils, may be synthesized into what we may designate as higher good."

To Bosanquet, the universe is a whole wherein things could not have been otherwise, and alternative possibility is meaningless. For nothing ought to have been otherwise since nothing, considering all the facts, could have been otherwise. And yet it is an order wherein finite life, progress and betterment is a fact compatible with both absolute completion and real change and creative activity, and



where good and evil are inseparable and each is meaningless without the other. And yet spirituality is attained by loyalty to harmonizing ideals as they rise to victory through the principles of conflict, opposition and sacrifice. The sacrificial spirit enters into the heart of existence and treasures within its bosom the deepest meaning of human idealism.

To Kant, perfection is not so much a rational insight into structure as a compelling sense that perfection is the demand of the moral life. The perfect, the ought to be, must be; it is an order of universality, and makes possible the achievement of the moral ideal.

Thus, while both regard the absolute perfect as a fact, they arrive at it in different ways. To Kant the perfection takes on the character of an ethical ontological real. The very conviction that the *moral order* is an absolute is the root of Kant's religious thought. The *moral order* being real, its implications as to the character of the world order follow.

After all, the implication of the ethical ontological or the satisfying ontological appears to permeate most of human thought. Men affirm things will be because they know they ought to be. If a thinker feels that a certain whole of thought, a certain order and arrangement of the data of experience, is the most satisfying, he tends to accept it as real—not because *he* thinks it or merely because it is satisfying to *him* but because of the surety that it is a universal, an ontological real. We may be convinced that a situation is real because it is practical, and then we say, "it is true because it is useful"; or we may say it is real because we are sure it is satisfying to certain values very precious to human life; real, because of a logical harmony, a beauty, an inability to conceive an otherwise, or because it means progress or gets social recognition, social assent, etc.



Why should any one feel he has truth when he obtains "truths' cash-value in experiential terms"? Why ask "what concrete difference will its being true make in any one's actual life"? Why object to the notion that "when you've got your true idea of anything, there's an end of the matter"? To obtain the final truth of a thing does mean an end of that truth-search and does mean a conviction as to the way of the world. And whether one is a pragmatist, an absolute idealist, a naturalist, or a skeptic, he does live by just such a lasting conviction as to the way of the cosmos. Why feel confidence in the truths of an idea you can verify or that will harmonize with your deepest notions and most precious belief? Well! just because cash-values in experience, concrete differences in effects, a round of satisfaction, verification in the processes of adjustment, all point to the fact that the local idea is in harmony with the largest available organic whole of fact. The truth of an idea consists in its implication of the ontological absolute. Even the subjectivism of Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* is believed to be true only insofar as the self is affirmed to be immediate or organic to all time. There can be no moment in all eternity in which I doubt but that implies I am. But of course there is still the question of whether I am whenever I doubt not.

The ontological real involves three great principles: the complete, the organic, and the superlative. This complete, organic whole is the sufficient real. The absolutist is convinced that no matter whether one is a skeptic, a pragmatist, a subjective idealist, an absolute idealist, a pluralist, a dualistic supernaturalist, or a realist, all, insofar as they are consistent, imply the ontological perfect. The ought-to-be of Kant is really an ontological moral perfection which, as existing, must therefore imply the conditions of its realization, namely, God, immortality and freedom.

Supposing that, with the realist, I say, "I see not the white page, but only my sensation of the white page, but the correspondence of all my other sensations with this gives me reason to infer that my sensation represents the white page as it really is." Why this conviction as to the representation of the real by perception? My conviction rests on belief that I, in my verification through appeal to co-operative sense data, am in unity with an ontological absolute. For just to the degree to which I treat all my co-operative sense data as merely events restricted to my local private self, to that degree I feel I cannot truthfully be sure that my sensation of the white page represents a real white page. Here then we may say with Royce, "Whoever has a world at all has it as an expression of ideal demands."<sup>3</sup> And this is one of the cardinal principles of religious insight, even to the point where one can say in sublime adoration, "Thy faith hath made thee whole."

#### KANT ON RIGHTEOUSNESS AND THE PRINCIPLE OF DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

With Kant righteousness apparently signifies distributive justice according to *individual* ethical merit and retribution; a distribution of goods along the pathway of immortal life according to some general standards of equity following the principle of individual and proportional moral worth.

In the field of religion, the principle of individualistic justice was not questioned by Kant. The highest objective of religion, the focus of the ethical universe to Kant appears to be the motivating of universal distributive justice. God, he believed, demands holiness "inexorably as a duty in order to assign to everyone his exact share in the

<sup>3</sup> *Lectures on Modern Idealism*, p. 240.

highest good; . . . Created beings can hope to share in the highest good only insofar as they are conscious of having stood the test of the moral law" (p. 129). Kant's principle, "Act so that the maxims of your will may be in perfect harmony with a universal system of laws," seemed to him in no wise irreconcilable with the belief that by so doing one may attain more truly distributive justice. To Bosanquet, on the other hand, such a principle would mean not necessarily an approximation to the realization of distributive justice but rather an appreciation, glory, and insight into the perfect peace that passeth all understanding, and a peace in which man participates by application of the principle of love and devotion in experience. And this peace, both Bosanquet and Kant would say, cannot be realized in a world thought of as a mere humanistic, social, or pragmatic order. Bosanquet would say that social harmonizing in love or loyal devotion to a cause, to be truly religious, must be an expression of an absolute perfection. Religion demands real, absolute perfection. On the other hand, Kant would say that, to be religious, the peace in human experience must express holiness or "perfect harmony of the will with the moral law," and this implies a God who makes possible, in unending life, the harmony of happiness and virtue in men and the possibility of perfect harmony with the will of God "in infinite duration" "as it is surveyed by God alone" (p. 130).

According to Kant, God demands holiness "inexorably as a duty in order to assign every one his exact share in the highest good. . . . Created beings can hope to share in the highest good only insofar as they are conscious of having stood the test of the moral law" (p. 129). Ultimately, *free individualistic* moral resolve is the only just determinant of man's place in the scale of advance. If, says Kant, "they have advanced from lower to higher degrees of morality, and have thus proved the strength of their

resolution, they may hope to make unbroken progress in the future as long as they live here, and even beyond the present life" (p. 129). To one accustomed to think of distributive justice as an inferior rather than as the supreme moral law, or to one who is accustomed to feel that the very structure of society and of individual difference in evaluation forbids the possibility of genuine distributive justice, or to one accustomed to conceive the relations of punishments and rewards such that no man suffereth unto himself and no man can be awarded without altering the values of associates, and to one impressed by the multiple cosmic conditions that determine the strength of a man's resolution to be holy, Kant's emphasis of distributive justice appears abstract and unreal.

The ethics of distributive justice, common ethics, the righteousness for which the economic, capitalistic, labor, legal and social idealistic worlds strive, alike fail miserably to see that the ultimate and most significant fact of moral life is the fact that individuals not only can and do suffer for the wrong doing of other individuals, and suffer because of natural conflicts and repressions of life, but that, because of the structure of life and aspirations, they cannot in all eternity escape suffering; they fail to see that it is only because men suffer on account of the wrong doings of others that they are able to do positive good unto their fellows, and that natural evil is inevitable so long as human life is limited in knowledge and power. If we are free to benefit by the action of our fellows we are equally made to suffer by virtue of their organic union with ourselves. Otherwise there is neither sin nor virtue. No man either sinneth or doeth good of himself. Distributive justice is merely a makeshift for attaining happiness in a restricted pragmatic order of localized rights, where loyalties are relatively selfish and provincial. It cannot be an ultimate order. Ultimately the transcending loyalty that



vicariously sacrifices in devotional love for the good of the largest social whole, and in adoration of the most high, is a superior form of spiritual life.

In reference to the fact of inner conflict and the way of emancipation from evil, Bosanquet stresses more than Kant the function of the principle of rationality as a means by which man, through readjustment, reconciliation, and syntheses, realizes a more or less harmonious non-contradictory whole. "By identifying the private self not with its own achievement but with perfection divined as its true individuality the finite attains what he cannot attain in his own right, the character of perfection."<sup>4</sup> Kant, on the other hand, appears to place more stress upon the will-to-do. As he said, "created beings can hope to share in the highest good only insofar as they are conscious of having stood the test of the moral law" (p. 129).

With Bosanquet there is no way of escape from evil. Spirituality is a function of evil, though spirituality must never aim to realize the evil. Good and evil are not facts that can exist without each other. There is no dualism here. Religion, happiness, spirituality, worth of life, must never aim to realize the evil. They must necessarily be explained *not* by escape from but *by* loyalties, harmonies, interpretations, that lift life to a vision of the ideal by, through, and in spite of the oppression and pain of evil. Kant, on the other hand, appears to imply, or at least to suggest, a dualism of good and evil. There even is some affinity, though not pronounced, with Wm. James' view of evil. In the words of James, "The way of escape from evil . . . is not by getting it *Aufgehoben*, or preserved in the whole as an element essential but overcome. It is by dropping it out altogether, throwing it overboard and getting beyond it, helping to make a universe that shall forget its very place and name."<sup>5</sup> By way of comparison, we

<sup>4</sup> *The Value and Destiny of the Individual*, p. 229.

<sup>5</sup> *Pragmatism*, p. 297.

find Kant's phrasing as follows: "The highest good of a possible world must therefore consist in the union of virtue and happiness, in the same person" (p. 117). "Created beings can hope to share in the highest good." But, says Kant, "They can never hope in this life or indeed, at any imaginable point of time in the future life, to be in perfect harmony with the will of God, but they may hope for this harmony in the infinite duration of their existence as it is surveyed by God alone" (pp. 129-130).

To Bosanquet, religion may insure the greatest peace and the greatest value of life, but it will not thereby bring a happiness of unalloyed comfort. Kant agrees that religion gives the greatest peace and the highest value of life for only by religion does one attain holiness. But complete goodness, i. e., the union of sense comfort with virtue to the elimination of evil is held out as a promise of the religious life by way of the surety of immortality and the use of the good will. In a sense, Kant could have a fellow-feeling for Wm. James when he said, "On pragmatic principles, if the hypothesis of God works satisfactorily in the widest sense of the word it is true." \* For with Kant the hypothesis of God works as a means to the realization of human duty to promote the highest good; God, an existent "cause of nature as a whole which is distinct from nature," is a postulate of the moral law (pp. 130-131).

But Bosanquet sees no necessity of postulating such a theistic God. The perfect is the absolutely self-sufficient, and this is a true religious object. The so-called God of religious experience is only a phase of the perfect. It is "the representative of the universe when considered as overcoming evil by good"; the most complete co-ordination of the good as seen by humans contrasted with the not good. The universe as the perfect is more than a whole which includes good and evil forces. It is an organ-

\* *Pragmatism*, p. 299.

ization of all factors, or perfection. Good and evil are only restricted, that is, more or less abstract, aspects of the absolutely perfect.<sup>7</sup>

Neither the religious monism of Kant nor that of Bosanquet can be described as a "quietism of indifference," a cosmic emotion on which one may lie back in the peace of inward security. Rather both thinkers stress the importance of the active, achieving life. And neither of them treats God exactly after the manner of the absolute of theism, namely, as a being who in his creative activity self-imposes limits on himself. To Bosanquet, such a free act on the part of the absolute, the perfect, would be meaningless. For Kant, on the other hand, the absolute, as God, expresses his nature to the full by willing to the full the conditions of perfect justice in a world of free persons.

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<sup>7</sup> See *The Value and Destiny of the Individual*, pp. 250, 391, 311.





KANT'S PHILOSOPHY OF LAW



## KANT'S PHILOSOPHY OF LAW

THE large significance of the philosophy of Kant turns upon the central fact that, after having accepted frankly the viewpoint and methods appropriate to modern physical science, he was able to vindicate for the moral life of man a standing and a power which could not be explained away by the metaphysics of materialism. The physics of Newton dominates his reading of the phenomena of nature; but more significant than the phenomena of nature is the attitude and power of the moral will of man. Particularly as the moral will of man uncovers the law of its true being and reveals that respect for the sanctity of personality which is the real heart of all moral living, Kant's mighty thought moves on to its great and central theme. It is the thought, in brief, of an *ethical idealism*; of an interpretation of human experience which brings strongly into the foreground the validity and power of the ideals of ethics. And if this ethical idealism works against a background of an almost materialistic interpretation of the science of physical nature, that fact may serve to make it so much the more significant to the modern mind, which assuredly confronts the same type of problem.

It is in the light of this blending of ethical idealism with naturalistic science that we must interpret, I suppose, substantially all of Kant's far-reaching philosophical studies. Even the doctrine of the limitations of human science, which may frequently appear to us as a mere negative agnosticism, had clearly to his mind throughout this supreme ethical interest and reference. "I had to make

way with science in order to make room for faith." That is, it was necessary to show that the cheapened and washed out conceptions of naturalistic science do not go to the heart of human experience, in order to make persuasive the insight that loyalty to moral ideals is not merely human illusion. It is the faith in moral values, then, which is thus to be rescued from the shallow materialism that dogs and misinterprets the modern science of physical things.

It is not strange that after Kant, in the spirit thus sketched and with his peculiar thoroughness and profundity, had studied the great outstanding spiritual factors known as science and ethics, he should have turned his thoughtful attention to that somewhat different plexus of human relationships represented by the state, with its organized institutions designed to express the spirit of law and of justice. The problems that gather about the political relationships of men are manifold, indeed, and had invited human philosophical reflection from the time of the Greeks, as they do now, and must always continue to do. To Kant, however, these problems constituted a summons to rethink, from the very foundations, the whole meaning and implication of the political relationships of men; and particularly to apply with thoroughness to these issues the well reasoned ethical idealism which constitutes his central philosophy and gives to it unity of conception. Kant's response to this summons, as expressed in various books, gives us his *Philosophy of the State and of Law*.

We must doubtless regret that the main systematic book of this group bears so late a date. The *Metaphysical Principles of Law*, or *Rechtslehre*, was published in 1797. At that period of his age, however, Kant had lost much in point of originality and creative power, so that the volume, while strongly reasoned and profound, really contains little which had not appeared in his previous and more scattered works. Had his strength remained unabated, we







A PORTRAIT OF KANT

(Drawn about 1755 by Countess Charlotte Amalia Keyserling)

might have hoped for a much more incisive systematic presentation. At the same time, the book is competent, and in its main lines it assuredly represents what Kant would have meant to say.

Now the lines of influence which have emanated from Kant's writings on the Philosophy of Law have been numerous and important. In order to enable us to gain some understanding of the nature of that influence, we must first survey a few of his most significant teachings. And first, we may study the very conception of law in its political sense—what it is, and how it is related to the kind of law which morality interprets to us. We have already reminded ourselves that Kant's ethics is the key to his entire philosophy. How, then, does his Jurisprudence relate itself to the Ethics?

Political laws define duties, as do moral laws; and all duties are ultimately moral. Respect for the sacredness of personality is implied in all duties. In this sense the moral seems ready to shoot through all branches of the political, and to dominate the scene entirely. But there is an important difference in the nature of the motive implied in the two—a difference so important, indeed, that it results in constituting two fields of vastly different character—Ethics and Jurisprudence. Ethical motivation is internal. It is the expression of our conscious respect for duty, and ultimately of our reverence for the absolute value of rational personality. Like the quality of mercy, it may not be constrained. Political motivation, on the other hand, is external. It seizes upon any influence which is likely to be effective in inducing the people to carry out the required act, whatever be their inward state of mind. Any club is good enough to beat a dog, it is said; and likewise any motive that will give results is available to sustain a political law. Fear of death, fear of incarceration, fear of a money fine—these are characteristic political

motives. They are external to the real merits of the act. Further, they all have this common quality, that they arise from the application of external force. In general, then, political duties are such as may be made effective by force, and the field of jurisprudence is the field of *enforceable* law; whereas the very essence of a *moral* act would be impaired if it were performed from any such external motive.

But while this distinction of enforceability separates political law from morals, it does but make more acute at this stage the philosophical problem that underlies the power of the state. Free citizens are not dogs, to be beaten into conformity. Indeed, Kant is convinced and declares that Freedom is the fundamental right of everyone. "Freedom," he declares, "is Independence of the compulsory will of another; and in so far as it can co-exist with the Freedom of all according to a universal Law, it is the one sole original, inborn Right belonging to every man in virtue of his Humanity." Man has further and highly important spiritual claims which he may make upon the state. He may claim *equality* of treatment, whereby he is not bound by others to do anything more than that to which he may reciprocally bind them. There are also many other claims which rightly grow out of the system of justice in which man participates. "But," Kant adds, "all these Rights or Titles are already included in the Principle of Innate Freedom, and are not distinguished from it." Freedom, then, which in its noblest sense is the culmination of Kant's ethics, is also the key to his politics; and if the sense is a somewhat different one, it still remains true that for him the real basis of the state is essentially moral.

After studying, then, the conditions under which men enter into external relations with one another, and pointing out that in such cases we must needs concern ourselves not with the inward wish, but with the overt act, Kant summarizes the formal principle which must dominate the entire Philosophy of Law as follows:

"Act externally in such a manner that the free exercise of thy Will may be able to co-exist with the Freedom of all others according to a universal Law."

In accordance with this thought, then, legal right or political law comprehends the whole of the conditions under which the voluntary actions of any one Person can be harmonized in reality with the voluntary actions of every other Person, according to a universal Law of Freedom. Thus we get the idea of a system of rights and duties, permeated by the spirit of Freedom and addressed to the service of Personalities, but not subject to a merely ethical motivation. It is in this way that the state gains its moral authority to compel obedience. Indeed, if we but look more narrowly, we shall see that the very compulsion which the civilized state exercises is itself in the service of Freedom. That is, disorderly and unjust living is truly a hindrance to real Freedom. The state, then, which puts down by force disorder and injustice, is but hindering the hindrance of Freedom, and is so far in support of the Freedom that exists in accordance with universal laws. We do not have, then, a situation in which compulsion is exercised by a privileged class entitled to rule, while the subjects are merely bound to submission. We have rather what Kant calls a universal reciprocal compulsion, in harmony with the Freedom of all.

We may pause at this stage of our development long enough to point out two or three consequences which Kant draws from the argument as so far developed. In the first place, Law is not a means to some ulterior end such as survival or social happiness, or political power. Rather, it has its own formal character based upon universality and justice. "Let Justice be done though the heavens fall." Professor Ihering wrote a book entitled *Der Zweck im Recht*, which has been translated into English under the title, *Law as a Means to an End*. But the whole conception that



law is simply a means to an ulterior end is highly obnoxious to Kant. To him it seems too much like chaining justice to the chariot wheels of economic or dynastic success. It is a heterogony of ends, and as such it arouses in his nature all the vigor of antagonism which he had previously thrown into the battle against hedonism. Kant seemed to feel that if this whole system of rights and duties, which really reflects the sacredness of personality, should come to be regarded as simply means to some ulterior end, such as wealth or power, then some fine morning an unusually resolute government might tear up all these scraps of paper, march through Belgium, trample upon human rights, and in general adopt more direct and effective means than justice to secure those ulterior and unjust ends. Of course, when any particular claim is put forward, there is usually some objective in view; but the general form of legal right stands fast of itself, and is not a mere means to some single end. The import of this contention is expressed by our contemporary Kantian jurist Del Vecchio in the following terms: "Law, as well as morals, has its principle in the nature or essence of man."

A second line of comment starts from the phrase by which Kant defines the sphere of state compulsion. The hindrance of a hindrance may indeed play into the hands of moral progress or self-realization, but it does not deliberately foster and activate such moral progress. Kant, then, is strongly opposed to all paternalism on the part of the government. The government must not go forth to do good to the citizens according to its own method. That way lies despotism. On the other hand, the citizens are to live their own lives, realize or fail to realize their own moral nature according to the quality of their own moral motivation. Otherwise he conceives that there is no freedom. On this matter of paternalism he is as essentially

adverse as is John Stuart Mill, but for somewhat different reasons.

A still further consequence of the same movement of thought is found in Kant's opposition to the culture state conception. This conception was fostered by Fichte, Hegel, and later German Idealism in general. The laws of the state are to be systematically used to foster human progress, and to aid men in fighting the fight against poverty, disease, old age, ignorance, and disorganization. Probably the better meaning of German *Kultur* turns upon this theory. But the entire *Kulturstaat* conception gets cold comfort from Kant. He regards it as an attempt to force upon people a goodness which must really come from the self-determination of their own moral wills. It is a misuse of the power of the state, and is a disguised tyranny. Let the state restrict its functions to hindering those hindrances to freedom which arise in the external actions of men, and then let the citizens in private life cultivate character and morality. So shall happiness be attained.

The considerations we have so far touched upon gather about Kant's introductory discussion. If we wish to continue the study of Kant's views concerning the rational foundations of the power of the state, we must pass over for the present the first part of the *Rechtslehre*, and come at once to the second half. This part deals with Public Law, that is, with the system of those laws which require a public promulgation in order to produce a juridical state of society. It is there that we get the more explicit thinking of Kant on the essential relation of the individual will to civil society, and the treatment of those themes which had already engaged the attention of Hobbes and Locke, of Spinoza and Rousseau. It is clear that Kant in all this is working with explicit reference to the thinking of the men just named. I judge that he had more sympathy for the teaching of each of them, in this field, than he is accus-

tomed to display towards the thinkers of the past. But of course his own doctrine re-edits the entire debate under the influence of his own dominating philosophy.

Kant's doctrine of the state takes on the external form of the social contract theory, as had been the case also with the writers just mentioned. Indeed, he clearly owes much both to Hobbes and to Rousseau. Yet after all the very vital differences which Kant introduces into the discussion suffice to make a vast change in the character of the theory. In particular, they give the result that practically all of the objections which are regarded today as eliminating the social contract theory from political philosophy prove to be of no force or effect whatever as against the philosophy of Kant.

For instance, it is urged that the social contract was unhistorical. States are not actually founded that way. But Kant admits this point, and even more than admits it. The idea of an original contract, he says is "properly only an outward mode of representing the idea by which the rightfulness of the process of organizing a Constitution may be made conceivable." "It is vain to inquire into the historical origin of the political mechanism, for it is no longer possible to discover historically the point of time at which civil society took its beginning. Savages do not draw up a documentary record of their having admitted themselves to law; and it may be inferred from the nature of uncivilized men that they must have set out from a state of violence." The point about the social contract phraseology is that it offers the happiest and most direct manner of placing before us the problem of the freedom and true interest of the individual citizen in his relation to the common life. It may be like what English jurists once called a legal fiction, but be none the less valuable for that if it states wisely the relationships involved. And now, the social contract theory does indeed state matters wisely, Kant conceives.

"For however well disposed or favorable to Right men may be considered to be of themselves, the rational Idea of a state of society not yet regulated by Right must be taken as our starting point." Kant point out that we need not think of this state of Nature, so-called, as a state of absolute Injustice in which human relations are controlled by force alone. It might have group life, even family life, and even rudimentary property relations. The point is that this natural condition must be regarded, if it ever existed, as a state of society that was void of regulation by justice, so that if a matter of justice came to be in dispute no competent judge was found to give an authorized legal decision upon it. Such a state of nature would therefore in time become one of insecurity and disorder, and it is reasonable for men to strive to pass out of it. Let us now follow somewhat closely Kant's brief account of the act by which the civil state is constituted. I quote: "The act by which a People is represented as constituting itself into a state, is termed the *Original Contract*. . . . According to this representation, all and each of the people give up their external Freedom in order to receive it immediately again as Members of a Commonwealth. The Commonwealth is the people viewed as united altogether into a State. And thus it is not to be said that the individual in the State has sacrificed a part of his inborn external Freedom for a particular purpose; but he has abandoned his wild lawless Freedom wholly, in order to find all his proper Freedom again entire and undiminished, but in the form of a regulated order of dependence, that is, in a Civil state regulated by laws of justice. This relation of dependence thus arises out of his own regulative law giving Will."

Now Kant's representation here, as well as in certain other passages, has a certain external resemblance to that of Hobbes; but in point of essential meaning it is strongly



contrasting. In Hobbes, real freedom would consist in the power to follow out victoriously the wishes of one's lawless individual will; only, as this proves hopelessly impossible, it seems expedient to surrender freedom entirely, in order to gain security. Hobbes's view is essentially that the state represents the true self-interest of the citizen, an enlightened self-interest if you please, by reason of the stake which each man has in protecting his own skin. With Kant, on the other hand, true freedom is the bringing to pass of the Universal nature of man instead of his private and special interests. The wild, lawless Freedom, as Kant calls it, which each man surrenders, is the spurious and illusory interpretation of man's life, not, as with Hobbes, the real essence; and the regulated order of dependence within a system of rights and duties, instead of being, as with Hobbes, the price which we have to pay to buy protection, is for Kant rather the victorious establishment of the conditions under which real and true freedom may now be brought to pass. For Kant, as for Spinoza, the wise man is more free in a system of law that is addressed to the establishment of humane ideals than he could possibly be when out from under law and wildly prosecuting his own separatist interests. Now this all turns upon the emphasis by Kant upon the universal nature of man, and of course would be utterly impossible for Hobbes. We do not find in Kant's writings, of course, the particular form of discussion of the Universal Self or the Real Will with which Hegelian writers have made us familiar; but the movement of thought in that direction is very close.

Further, in Hobbes the motive for entering the civil state is entirely egoistic. One gains distaste for the mean, nasty, and brutish conditions which issue from the warfare of all against all. In Kant, however, there is the recognition of a moral obligation to pass from this disorganized status. Indeed, he formulates this obligation into a



so-called Postulate of Public Right, as follows: "In the relation of unavoidable co-existence with others, thou shalt pass from the state of Nature into a juridicial Union constituted under the condition of a Distributive Justice." Deeper, then, than the arbitrary overt decree of the individual will that may give or withhold assent to the contract, is the moral obligation of civic loyalty which issues from the universal will. And this Kant often emphasizes. It applies not only to individuals in their relation to the state, but also to sovereign states in their relation to a Permanent Peace and a Congress of Nations. These also have a duty to pass out of their natural state of disorganized aloofness which breeds perpetual war, and into an organized system of legal institutions which may found a permanent peace. In the case of the nations, however, it remains for Kant a problem how that can be brought about.

Now these considerations in Kant's theory seem to obviate another historic objection to the social contract theory—that it is a breeder of secession. If the obligation to civic loyalty is really more profound than one's overt decision for or against, then secessionism is a mistaken inference. Kant, indeed, almost overdoes the business of making the contract stick. He rejects not only the right of secession from civil society, but also the right of a revolutionary change of government, no matter how aggravating the conditions might become. Somewhat inconsistently, he provides for an evolutionary *reform* instituted by the sovereign. It is evident, however, that the horrors of the French Revolution had impressed him much as they did Burke.

A third common objection to the social contract theory is that it is a logical circle in any case. It strives to show that we are in duty bound to obey the law because we have so contracted. But this assumes the prior bounden duty to carry out our contracts, which is itself a product

of law. And this would be lifting ourselves by our boot straps. Against Kant's theory, however, this objection does not lie, since his fundamental obligation is that to the freedom of the rational nature of man, and this obligation is not a product of the civil law.

But it is fair to point out, I think, that in so transforming the social contract theory as to avoid these historic difficulties, Kant has really given up the essence of the idea of a voluntary contract. Aristotle had long ago taught that man is by nature a builder of states, that political government comes by nature and not by convention; and we usually think of Aristotle's political theory as the great opponent, throughout the ages, of the social contract theory. Now Kant's view is not that man is social, exactly, but rather that he is endowed with a universal nature; and the state arises from the attempt to realize this universal nature under the conditions of external relations and motivation. Essentially, then, the state is natural to man. If in any sense a product of convention, it is not of a convention that is arbitrary and dictated by private interest. We may speak of a rational convention, of a compact that expresses the freedom of man's true nature and yet binds the individual aspects of personality to its more universal interests. But in fact at such a stage of discussion the spirit of Kantianism has burst the shell of the social contract speculation, and henceforward it is destined to live its own life in the field of political philosophy.

We may notice only slightly the farther development in detail of Kant's theory of the state. It is evident that he looks with interest upon the form adopted by the American state, then so recently organized, to which he repeatedly refers. The complete separation of the three powers of government, executive, legislative, and judicial, he regards as an essential bulwark against tyranny, and as sufficient for the purpose. An hereditary nobility "is a rank which

takes precedence of merit and is hoped for without good reason—a thing of the imagination without genuine reality. It is impossible that the common will of all the people should agree to such a groundless prerogative and hence even the sovereign cannot make it valid.” Where such distinctions exist they should be allowed to fall into abeyance as public opinion matures upon the subject. Thus the state will pass from the three-fold division into sovereign, nobles, and people, to the two-fold and only natural division into sovereign and people.

The various forms of the state, monarchy, democracy, and so forth, Kant considers of minor importance. To a certain extent they are simply products of history and the habits of the people. This represents the mere letter of political philosophy. “But the *Spirit* of the original contract contains and imposes upon the constituting power the obligation to make the mode of the *government* conformable to its idea, and if this cannot be effected at once, to change it gradually and continuously until it harmonizes in its working with the only rightful constitution, which is that of a Pure Republic.” A republic is the only enduring political constitution, he urges, because in it the Law is itself sovereign, and is no longer attached to any particular person. A republic, then, is the ultimate goal of all public laws.

From the field of private Law I touch upon one point only—the theory of private property. This also is regarded by Kant as not simply a means to social ends, but as founded in the very nature of personality. The state is necessary to provide the securities for property claims, to be sure, but the property right is essentially anterior to the state, and may not be set aside by the latter. Kant's philosophy in this matter gives no footing whatever for Bolshevism.

If we turn now from our survey of Kant's *Rechtslehre* to a brief notice of the methods by which it has taken effect upon the history of human thought, we may distinguish two such methods, one direct and one indirect. Its direct influence has been through the writings of scholars of the Kantian school in general, and of Kantian jurists in particular. Such scholars have always existed. They are existent today, are even active and vigorous, although among jurists not in large numbers. I may cite for example from this list at present the name of the incisive and able young jurist of the University of Bologna, Professor Del Vecchio. His volume on *The Formal Bases of Law* has been translated as the representative of the Neo-Kantian theory of jurisprudence in the *Modern Legal Philosophy Series* which is sponsored by Dean Wigmore and others. His writings, however, extend far beyond this volume. Del Vecchio concedes little to the followers of Fichte or Hegel in matters of fundamental political philosophy, and almost nothing to the followers of Positivism and the sociological movement. The general result of his studies is to carry the spirit and principles of Kant's philosophy far into the details of present day law and jurisprudence.

It is my personal opinion, however, that the indirect influence of Kant's thought has been already far greater than the direct, and that this is likely to continue to be increasingly true. The indirect influence was in part through the writings of Fichte, Hegel, and other apostles of German Idealism. But here the German development contrasts with Kant in many important respects. In England, however, the development of the philosophy of political idealism, while stimulated indeed by the post-Kantian thinkers, has been more sympathetic with Kant's reservations than in Germany. Works like T. H. Green's *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation* and Bernard Bosanquet's *Philosophical Theory of the State* remain true



to much that is central and essential in Kant's philosophy, while they systematically change the things that must be changed. They do not concede as much to the conception of the culture state as do the German writers, and in practical political effect are nearer to the traditions of English Liberalism than they are to German *Kultur*. But the influence of these English thinkers is remarkably pervasive today, and even writers who, like Professor Hobhouse, are actively criticizing some aspects of the theorizing of Green and Bosanquet, are still more than two-thirds under the influence of their thinking.

The thing that delivers Kant's political philosophy over to a thorough restatement at the hands of writers like Green and Bosanquet is his inadequate treatment of teleology in the realm of moral and social matters. In attempting to say that personality should not be a means to impersonal ends, Kant was led to make declarations which implied that morality and law were not means to *any* end, but simply exemplified a formal law, sacred and inexorable. Its effect upon his theory of punishment, for example, was notorious. "Even if a Civil Society resolved to dissolve itself with the consent of all its members," he writes, "the last murderer lying in the prison ought to be executed before the resolution was carried out. This ought to be done that everyone may realize the desert of his deeds, and that bloodguiltiness may not remain upon the people; for otherwise they might all be regarded as participators in the murder as a public violation of Justice." Now it is clear that such a formalistic treatment, which completely excludes all appreciation of moral purpose, is inconsistent with modern social thinking on such matters. And while in many respects one may judge that modern social theory could learn a great deal from Kant, yet in this fundamental respect it is evident that Kant must himself be revised.



But it has proved possible to carry out such a revision while remaining true to the central aspirations of the Kantian political philosophy; and with a brief restatement of what we should conceive those central aspirations to be, we may conclude our present study.

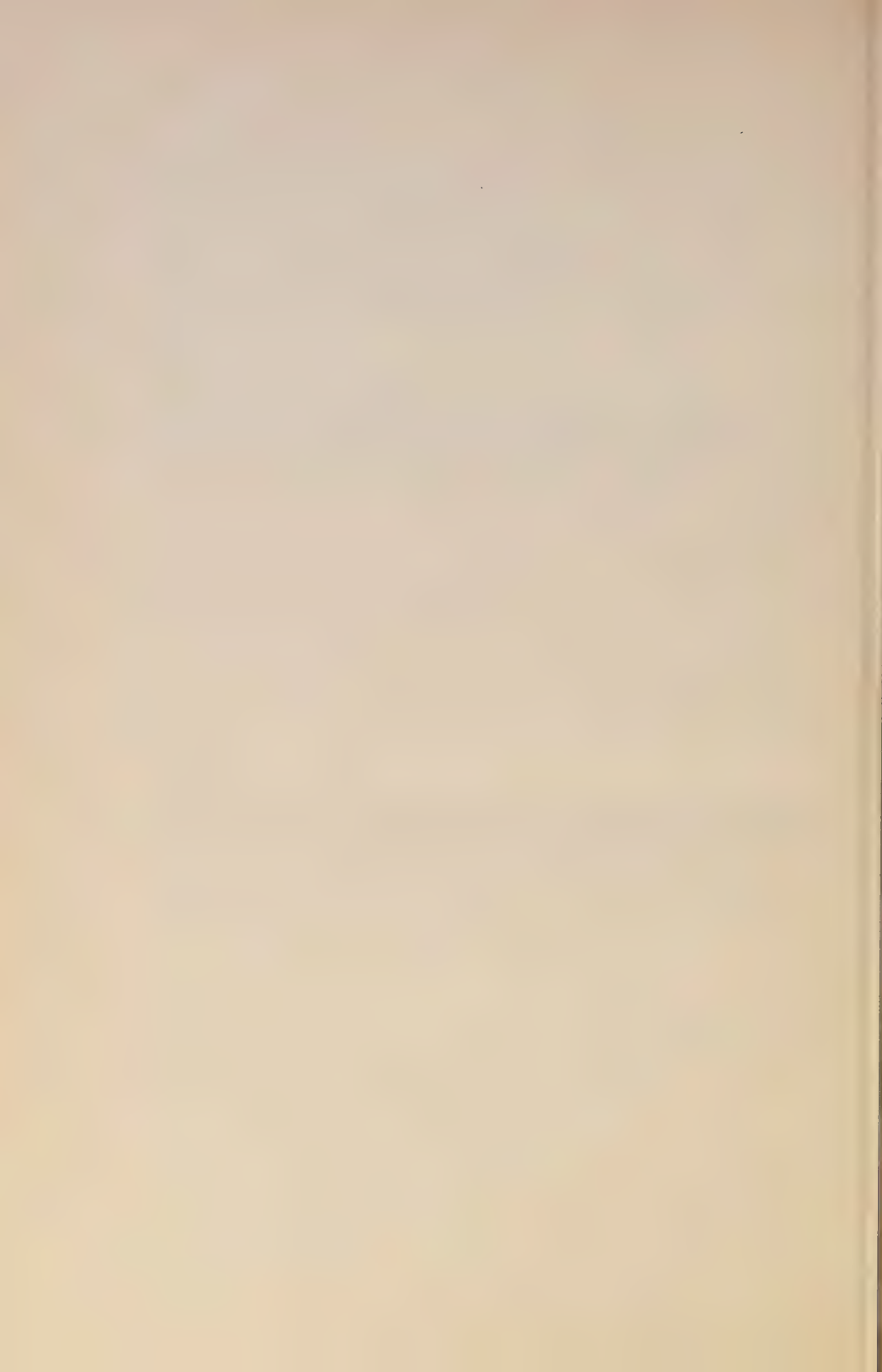
Kant is setting forth the idea of a liberty which is realized in and through a system of Law. The law may be coercive and external, indeed, but it is imbued with the spirit of humanitarian ideals, and is really addressed to the protection of the sanctity of personality. In such a system of law the individual loses, indeed, his wild, lawless freedom, but that is only a misinterpretation and a mistake in any event. He gains the power to give effect to the universal and far-reaching potentialities of his nature, and the institutions which give scope and security for the opening up of such interests, and the bringing of them into actuality are spiritual indeed. We must repudiate, then, the supposition that force or craft is the ultimate explanation of the institutions of the state, or that the loyalties they demand from the individual are simply external impositions which curtail his freedom.

If it is true indeed, as it sometimes seems, that the lesson of liberty under law is the hardest lesson for young America to learn in such wise as really to believe it, perhaps we may do well to ponder more deeply than we have been accustomed to do on the meditations of the deep-thinking Kant concerning this great problem.

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KANT'S DOCTRINES CONCERNING PERPETUAL PEACE



## KANT'S DOCTRINES CONCERNING PERPETUAL PEACE

### I

KANT'S doctrine of perpetual peace is neither a momentary nor an incidental thought. The two writings in which it is most fully expressed, the *Idea of a Universal History* and the essay *On Perpetual Peace*, between them span the greater part of the critical period of Kant's thinking. The *Idea of Universal History* appeared in 1784, only three years after the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and *Perpetual Peace* appeared eleven years later, in 1795, only two years before the *Rechtslehre*, the last important contribution to Kant's system. Nor do these writings stand alone. There are allusions to the same doctrine in several of his other writings, though nowhere else is it so fully worked through. The doctrine is not incidental; it is a constituent part of Kant's system, organically related to his most fundamental conceptions, and in one aspect the very capstone of the whole. Kant has suffered greatly in the comprehension of his readers because they often stop too soon. To get the full scope of his view one must not only go beyond the *Critique of Pure Reason*—that goes without saying—though some of his critics have shown an extraordinary unreadiness to pass beyond it. One must also supplement the doctrines of the practical reason and the teleological judgment with the conception of a goal of civilization as expressed in the doctrine of perpetual peace. This is from one point of view the climax of the other doc-

trines. It is the purpose of this paper to explain this conception and show its connection with the main body of Kant's system; and to suggest some points of connection in it with the present world situation.

There is for Kant an analogy between the formation of the civil state, which is necessary for any organized society, and the formation of a universal civil order, which is the goal of civilization. It will be necessary to examine first in some detail the formation of the civil state, and then to ask in what respects the formation of a world order must be like it and in what respects it must be different.

## II

In his theory of the formation of the civil state Kant follows very closely the lines laid down by Thomas Hobbes. His view of the state of nature and the social contract are in substance the same. In this respect he is much nearer to Hobbes than to Locke or Rousseau. He is nearer to Hobbes because he shares Hobbes' view of human nature. Kant indeed adds to Hobbes' conception of man's nature a profoundly important element of reason. For Kant there are two sides of human nature—or perhaps better two levels—the natural and the rational, which are almost completely separated from each other. And it is perhaps because Kant's conception of the natural man was so completely identical with that of Hobbes that he was compelled to push the rational man so far over into another world. Remembering always that man's nature for Kant is also rational—indeed that the rational is the real man—we can ask provisionally what kind of being the natural man is.

The natural man is selfish. He is moved by impulse to respond to the circumstances in which he is placed, including the presence of his fellow men. He follows his desires, which bring him into constant collision with others. Yet





VIEW ACROSS THE RIVER PREGEL

(At the Old University (left); The City Gymnasium (right); to the rear,  
the Cathedral)



he needs his fellows; for his three overmastering desires are love of glory, love of power, and love of gain, and he must use his fellow men as his instruments in the attaining of these ends. But these aims are competitive. As he would use others in pursuing honor, power, or wealth, so they would use him. Such a state therefore is one of constant collision. It is a state of war. Though hostilities may cease for a time, there is no guarantee that peaceful relations will continue. But the insecurity and pain which this hostility entails thwart in turn the very impulses that lead to rivalry. So the play of these natural propensities leads to an equilibrium of impulses, an "unsocial sociality." Men have to learn to get on with each other. This does not however signify any change in the natural impulses. Kant is deeply pessimistic as he views man in the natural order of life. Man's impulses remain as selfish as before, but through mutual adjustment they grow less self-defeating. The system of adjustments into which man is forced by his conflicting and competitive impulses constitutes the order of civil society. By accepting the mutual limitations of a social order men make themselves actually less limited. This is the nature of the social contract.

But such a description of the course of man's natural adjustments is purely empirical. However far it be carried, it can only point out the desires at work, the conditioning circumstances, and the results attained. It could never show in these any moral value or authority. Moral authority has its origin in the deeper level of man's rational nature. If man takes his commands from circumstances, if he follows his desires, if he seeks external ends, he is merely living his natural life as an animal. Indeed his natural life is more chaotic than the animal's because less guided by instinct. Moral authority must be within, and wholly independent of conditions. Now the only law that can bind the will in complete independence of all other

conditions is the law of consistency. That sets our 'supreme duty and our only duty.

It is this rational authority in man that Hobbes completely ignores. The account of the play of human impulses in making society is substantially the same in Hobbes as in Kant. But Hobbes has no moral criterion by which to judge it. The social contract is for him only a vast expediency. For their mutual advantage men agree to subordinate their rights to the absolute authority of a sovereign, and Hobbes is sure that to submit to that authority, however tyrannous, would always be more expedient than to rebel. But beyond the principle of expediency he cannot go. Kant on the contrary brings the social contract, and every legal institution emerging under it, to the bar of reason, pronounces judgment on them, and if they are found rational acknowledges toward them the authority of duty. Duty for Hobbes is secondary. He finds it only in the external commands of a sovereign; but the whole social system which establishes and maintains the sovereign is itself the product of ultimate expediency. Kant completely separates expediency and duty, confining expediency entirely to the domain of the natural life, and duty entirely to the rational will within.

In this way Kant passes entirely beyond Hobbes in the meaning he gives to the order of the civil state. It becomes a system of law required by reason. The social contract is no longer merely a highly useful device for securing natural ends; it is also an Idea of Reason, and makes a valid claim on every citizen "as if he had given his personal assent to such a will." The requirements of the civil order embody "legal right," which is just the compass of the conditions on which the independent will of one can be united with the independent will of another according to a universal law of freedom. Just laws are those that the

citizen can be conceived as consistently enacting for all, including himself.

In the same way Kant justifies the use of compulsion by the state, its exercise of police power. For Hobbes—absolutist though he is—compulsion is justified only as the lesser of two evils; in the expediency of the natural order of life it is better than anarchy. But Kant justifies it on moral grounds. It is really self-compulsion and at the same time the fullest expression of one's own freedom. To be truly free is to be rationally—that is consistently—free. To be consistently free is to will for oneself only what at the same time one wills for others. The institutions of civil society are our own so far as we are reasonable selves.

The law of reason as Kant conceives it is often called subjective or individual; and this is true in one aspect, because each person is responsible for his own will alone. But in another aspect the law of reason is objective and universal; because in the first place it makes the same demand upon the will of every one (though for each one from within); and in the second place the demand of reason is one of sheer, formal consistency, which brings the self under the same universal rule as all other selves.

This formal and non-empirical character of reason, which I have stated most inadequately, is of course much more fully worked out in the Critiques. But it is important here because in the conception of a vocation and goal of the human race it is carried to its farthest possible expression. Indeed, it seems to me that just here more clearly perhaps than anywhere else we see Kant's dualism stretched beyond the breaking point, so that the phenomenal and the noumenal orders spill over into each other.

To revert now to Kant's idea of the social contract, did he understand that it actually took place as a specific event in time? No, not in any crudely unhistorical sense. He, like Hobbes, took it rather as a legal device for justifying



the continuance of the social order. Yet Kant came very much nearer than Hobbes to giving the social contract a genuinely historical meaning. Hobbes had essentially no philosophy of history. Both his state of nature and his social contract were recognized fictions, designed to give logical validity to the state. But when he once conceives the state as established, it is essentially static. He is interested in expounding and supporting it rather than developing it. No doubt he would improve details, but in principle he has no theory of human progress. This brings us to another very important advance of Kant over Hobbes.

For Kant does have a philosophy of history. He sees man gradually building up a social order. Projecting this process backward, he sees the state of nature and the social contract as very nearly literal events. Projecting the process forward, he sees as the goal a world society completely ordered under law, the ultimate duty of man. Now the interesting thing about this process of history for Kant is that reason is found—or almost found—to be operating in it. The events of history belong of course to the natural order of man's life. They are purely empirical, they are still incomplete, and so they cannot possibly prove the operation of any rational principle. Nevertheless they suggest such a principle. They move on *as if* there were an overruling purpose in them. The idea of this purpose is not derived, at least not conclusively derived, from the facts of history; it is an idea of reason which we think into the facts. But when we do think it in we find that it fits marvellously well. This is of course but a new form of the teleological judgment, and Kant could never have admitted that it gives real knowledge. It is an act of faith. Nevertheless he is so sure of the idea, he follows it out with such enthusiasm, he personifies Nature and traces out her vast purpose for man with such abandon, that faith has clearly done its perfect work.

History reveals man as a natural being, a natural being in whom a moral life is being realized. But this is revealed only by history as a whole. This is what Kant means by "universal history on a cosmopolitan plan." It reveals rational purpose only on a grand scale, a purpose that is not at all identical with any purpose which moves men in the particular events of history, a purpose that could never be discovered in the natural life of any individual. Kant has little respect for this natural life of men. He calls it "disgusting." It fails to attain much happiness, or to become worthy of happiness. Yet, through it all, men are building better than they know. The life of mankind is more than the sum of the lives of all men; it is a continuous structure, like a single, long life in which rational purpose gradually controls.

How shall we state the end that seems thus to run through history? It is the development of all the powers of man in subordination to the law of reason. Man's weakness, the limited provision which nature makes for his wants, his necessary reliance upon his own efforts, all force him toward this end. "It seems as if nature cared not at all that he should live happily, but only that he should discipline and develop himself. . . . In the course of history . . . earlier generations seem to carry on their thankless efforts only on account of those that follow, laboring, as it were, to prepare a stage on which *they* can raise to a higher point the edifice designed by nature; so that only the latest comers can have the good fortune of inhabiting the dwelling which the long series of their predecessors have toiled, though without any conscious intent, to build up. But . . . this . . . is necessary if we once assume it was intended that a species of animals endowed with reason should exist, and that, as a species (which is immortal, though all individuals in it die), they were to attain the

full development of all their capacities." (H)<sup>1</sup>

What, again, is the means which nature uses toward this rational end? It is man's natural behavior which we have seen to be so hopelessly irrational. "The means which nature uses to bring about the development of all man's capacities, is the antagonism of these very capacities as they are manifested in society, an antagonism which in the end is turned into a means for the establishment of social order." (H). Men have an inclination to *isolate* themselves, because of their competitive desires for pleasure; but also an inclination to *associate* themselves, because they need each other to satisfy their most urgent desires. "Now it is just this resistance which awakens man's powers, . . . and which drives him, in the lust for honor, power, and riches, to win for himself a rank among his fellow men *with* whom he cannot live at peace, yet *without* whom he cannot live at all." "The natural impulses which prompt this effort . . . are . . . the spurs which drive him to the development of his powers." "Without these, in themselves by no means lovely, qualities which set man in social opposition to man, so that each finds his selfish claims resisted by the selfishness of all the others, men would have lived on in an Arcadian shepherd life, in perfect harmony, contentment, and mutual love; but all their talents would have remained forever hidden and undeveloped. Thus, as gentle as the sheep they tended, they would have given to their existence a value scarcely greater than that of their cattle. And the place among the ends of creation which was left for the development of rational beings would not have been filled." (H).

The end of nature, then, is the development of man's powers under the law of reason; the means, the equilibrium

<sup>1</sup> The quotations in this paper marked "H" are from the *Idea of History*; those marked "P" are from *Perpetual Peace*. These works are so short, and the editions and translations so differ in paging, that it does not seem necessary to give page references.

of antagonisms. The special form which the problem takes is the attainment of civil society. "The history of the human species as a whole may be regarded as the unravelling of a hidden plan of nature for accomplishing a perfect civil constitution for society . . . as the sole state of society in which the tendencies of human nature can all be fully developed." (H).

### III

Let us now revert to the analogy, spoken of at the beginning of our discussion, between the formation of separate civil societies, and the formation of a universal society. To Kant's mind the whole process of history falls rather definitely into these two parts. It is true that he recognizes successive steps of tentative experiment and gradual development within each of these; but without blurring the comparison and contrast of the two. The national units of modern Europe are taken for granted as a halting place. They are not yet perfected, but fairly completed forms of civil government; no one now lives outside a civil state. And they are the units out of which in turn a world order must be formed. Therefore to Kant's mind we are now at a middle point in history, in transition between the completion of one kind of civil unit and the beginning of another, the one nearly finished and the other scarcely begun. There is a considerable analogy between the two processes. Kant's most important thoughts here can most easily be brought out by comparing the two.

There are several points of analogy that appear at once. First, the natural relation between states as well as between individuals is one of war. Second, both must enter into relations of freedom-giving law. Third, the means by which nature stimulates both to enter a civil order is mutual antagonism, rivalry, and the equilibrium of inter-



ests, in the one case between individuals, in the other case between states. Fourth, nature's purpose is in both an overruling one, beyond the intention of the participants. Fifth, the ultimate worth of a civil order in both cases lies in providing a field for the development of man's capacities. I cannot forbear quoting three passages—in somewhat condensed form—which illustrate these several points. The first is from the essay on *Perpetual Peace*. "For states, in their relation to one another, there can be according to reason no other way of advancing from that lawless condition which unceasing war implies, than by giving up their savage lawless freedom, just as individual men have done, and yielding to the coercion of public laws." Kant also speaks of nature as "the great artist, in whose mechanical course is clearly exhibited a predetermined design to make harmony spring from the discord of men, even against their wills." The second passage is from the *Idea of Universal History*. "The establishment of a perfect constitution of society depends upon the problem of international relations adjusted to law. . . . To what purpose is labor bestowed upon a civil constitution adjusted to law for individual men, that is upon the creation of a commonwealth? The same antisocial impulse which first drove men to such a creation is again the cause that every commonwealth, in its external relations—that is, as a state in reference to other states—occupies the same ground of lawless and uncontrolled liberty; consequently each must anticipate from the other the very same evils which compelled individuals to enter the social state. Nature accordingly utilizes the spirit of enmity in man, as existing even in his national corporation, for the purpose of attaining through this antagonism a state of rest and security. By wars, by the exhaustion of incessant preparation for war, and by the pressure of evil consequences which war at last entails upon any nation even in time of peace, she



drives nations to all sorts of experiments and expedients; and finally, after infinite devastations, ruin, and exhaustion, to one expedient which reason should have suggested without so sad an experience, *viz.*, to quit the barbarous condition of lawless power, and to enter into a federal league of nations, in which even the weakest member looks for its rights and its protection not to its own power, or its own adjudication, but to this great confederation, to the united power, and the adjudication of the collective will." The third passage likewise is from the *Idea of Universal History*. "Hard as it may be to realize such an idea, states must of necessity be driven at last to the very same resolution to which the savage man of nature was driven with equal reluctance—*viz.*, to sacrifice brutal liberty, and to seek peace and security in a civil constitution founded upon law. All wars therefore are so many tentative essays (not in the intention of Man but in the intention of Nature) to bring about new relations of states, and by revolutions and dismemberments to form new political bodies. These again, either from internal defects or external attacks, cannot support themselves, but must undergo similar revolutions; until at last, partly by the best possible arrangement of civil government within, and partly by common concert and legal compact without, a condition is attained which, like a well ordered commonwealth, can maintain itself in the way of an automaton." Some of Kant's words in 1784 sound fresh and familiar in 1924!

There is an error that we must not make in reading such passages as these. We must not suppose that Kant justifies war. For a sixth point that we may add, in reference to this analogy between the two levels of social construction, is that Kant in both cases condemns the selfish antagonisms by which men drive each other into a civil order. Nature, it is true, so overrules these antagonisms as to get beneficial results out of them, but this does not in the least

redeem their evil character. Under Nature's purpose these offenses must needs come, but woe unto them by whom they come! Nature's purpose is transcendental. It is no part of the order of nature. It is an Idea of Reason which we are forced to assume, *as if* the order of nature were thus controlled. But each individual act of selfishness or war we are required by reason to condemn. Kant has much to say of the radical evil in human nature, and he is unsparing in his condemnation of war. If he possibly goes too far in his appreciation of the incidental good effects of war—his adherence to Hobbes' view of the formation of the civil state naturally led him to that—he never shares the Bernhardt sort of moral praise of war that has been all too common both in his day and in ours. On the contrary he attributes war simply to man's depravity. He draws an interesting contrast between the two levels of social organization in this respect. "The depravity of human nature," he says, "shows itself without disguise in the unrestrained relations of *nations* to each other, while in the law-governed civil state much of this is hidden by the check of government." (P.)

The obverse of this last point, in the seventh place, is that it is a positive duty to abandon the state of war, between both individuals and nations. "Reason, from her throne of the supreme law-giving moral power, absolutely condemns war as a morally lawful proceeding, and makes the state of peace, on the other hand, an immediate duty. Without a compact between the nations, however, this state of peace cannot be established or assured. Hence, there must be the kind of alliance which we may call a covenant of peace, which would differ from a treaty of peace in this respect that the latter merely puts an end to one war, while the former would seek to put an end to war for ever." (P.) "That a people should unite into a state . . . of freedom and equality . . . is a principle not

based on expediency, but on duty." (P.) He speaks of perpetual peace as a *Pflichtbegriff*, a morally imperative ideal. It is an idea "which reason directly prescribes to us." Thus the overruling purpose which reason leads us to read into history turns out to be precisely identical with the law of duty which reason prescribes to our own wills. It is in this respect that Kant's doctrine of perpetual peace forms the capstone of his system. The highest possible Idea of Reason that we read into the field of knowledge is this one that compasses the whole of that knowledge, the complete course of history, future as well as past. And the highest possible duty resting on the will of man is to take the final step in the ordering of life under law. But the two are one. There is a single goal set for both man and nature. Here at last the phenomenal and the noumenal coalesce. The last word of each is the same word.

This paper is intended as an exposition, not a criticism, of Kant's doctrine. But I should like to digress for a moment to suggest that a fruitful criticism of Kant's dualism might well begin at just this point. Here his dualism reaches its farthest extension and at the same time comes nearest to being overcome. Just here the phenomenal and the noumenal might be pushed over into each other and made to coalesce. Their relation could then be based on an entirely new principle which could be carried back to reconstruct the whole critical system. In the absolutist direction this has been done by the rational idealists, the classical example being the stupendous work of Caird in reconstructing the Kantian system so as to submerge its dualism in the Absolute. I suspect that a still more fruitful reconstruction could be made in the opposite direction of instrumentalism. A thoroughly naturalistic reconstruction could be made in the opposite direction of instrumentalism. A thoroughly naturalistic reconstruction of Kant might prove more sound than the absolutistic one.

The significant distinctions of the Kantian system would be reinterpreted as functional. Reason would no longer dictate moral values to experience, but would be instrumental in constructing higher levels of value within experience. Duty and expediency would no longer be divorced from each other, but would be successive reaches on the same scale, expediency deepened by its responsibilities and duty charged with vital content. The goal of history, conceived as the development of man's powers in the construction of a universal order of society, would be, not a transcendently determined idea of reason imposed on the temporal series of events, but an empirically developed purpose suggested by the events themselves, and reinforced by that systematic portrayal of them that constitutes history. If it could be shown that Kant in fact obtained this doctrine of perpetual peace, the capstone of his system, in just this functional manner, there would seem to be no better starting point than this for an instrumentalist re-interpretation of the whole system. And our own practical relation to the pursuit of the goal of history would be better understood in this way.

For, returning from this critical digression, we must note as an eighth point that Kant locates us at a definitely empirical point in the process of history. The two stages of social organization are curiously related, in that we in our age unfortunately fall between the two. "Before this last step is taken"—the step of world federation—"the human race, then about half way advanced in its progress, is in the deepest abyss of evils under an illusive show of external well being; and Rousseau was perhaps not so far wrong when he preferred the condition of the savage to that of the civilized man at the highest point where he has reached, but is hesitating to take, the final step of his ascent." Again, "in this delusive condition will the human race linger, until it shall have toiled upwards in the way



I have mentioned from its present chaotic abyss of political relations." (H.)

In the ninth place, when we ask what form of world organization Kant contemplates, we find him not entirely consistent. Sometimes he speaks of it as a single world state, exactly analogous to the civil government of the nation. But this is rather when he is emphasizing the general *principle* of civil order involved in human progress. When, however, he is concerned with methods and practical details, he holds back from any such consummation; a *federation* of states is then all that he is willing to endorse. He appreciates the difficulties of effective federation, and discusses some of them acutely, but he is so sensitive to the deadening effects of too widely centralized a government that he rejects a world state in favor of a federation. About many aspects of a world federation his opinion either is not clear, or varies. But on several fundamental matters he is quite clear. He sees that nations must be in a state of war, actual or latent, unless they "yield to the coercion of public laws." (P.) He sees that the only condition reconcilable with the individual freedom of nations is something of the nature of a federation for the purpose of doing away with war. (P.) He sees the ultimate futility of treaties without such a general rule of law. He sees that any coercive power given to a world federation must be, not military, but analogous only to the police power which gives security within the civil government. (H.) He sees that a genuine law of nations must mean the outlawry of war, for "there is no intelligible meaning in the idea of the law of nations as giving a right to make war." (P.)



## IV

Does Kant regard the goal of world federation as actually attainable? In one passage he says positively that it is an ideal that cannot be realized, though a continual approximation to it is possible and is our duty. But usually his tone is more confident. His hope rests partly on *a priori* grounds. "The morally bad . . . is in contradiction with itself; it counteracts its own natural effect, and thus makes room for the moral principle of good." (P.) Again, reason must be capable of subduing the natural. This is true subjectively; what is our duty must be possible. And it is true objectively; "it is the irresistible will of nature that right" (that is, "internal and external peace") "shall at last get the supremacy." (P.) But his confidence rests also upon empirical grounds. Though he never underestimates the difficulty of the undertaking (for he thinks that the second great step in civil government will be even more difficult than the first), he sees many signs of a new day internationally. Kant says that the governments are beginning, under the pressure of the evils of war, and "under a sense of their own danger, . . . though as yet without any authentic sanction of law, . . . to prepare all things from afar for the formation of a great primary state-body . . . such as is wholly unprecedented in all preceding ages. Although this body at present exists only in rude outline, yet already a stirring is beginning to be perceptible in all its limbs, each of which is interested in the maintenance of the whole. Even now there is enough to justify a hope that, after many . . . remodellings . . . the supreme purpose in nature will be accomplished in the establishment of a cosmopolitan state, as the bosom in which all the original tendencies of the human species are to be developed." (H).

How can we further the trend toward this goal? Several of the suggestions already quoted have a bearing here. But others should be mentioned. Broadly stated, Kant would have us avoid everything which would make the state of nature—the state of actual or possible war-permanent; and, even in the state of nature, to act on the principles from which a lasting peace is most likely to spring. He believes that we can anticipate and accelerate the movement. In particular he makes several concrete proposals which he calls articles of perpetual peace. Some of them are naturally superseded now, but several of them are vividly before our minds today. I have left myself time only to list some of these in barest outline, and to throw in some parenthetical remarks, which I hope may not seem flip-pant, but may suggest how modern and fresh they are.

Kant proposes that standing armies be gradually but altogether abolished; that no mercenary troops be hired from a neutral state; that too great an accumulation of treasure for military purposes be avoided; that no national debts be contracted in connection with international affairs; that free access be given to all people into every state; that weaker nations be not subjected to economic exploitation by stronger ones; that no state whether great or small having an independent existence be acquired by another through inheritance, exchange, purchase, or gift; that no policy be legal that is not capable of full publicity.

Free discussion of public policies shall be permitted to philosophers; that is, to thinkers in distinction from politicians (Kant thinks philosophers are so obviously incapable of sedition that when they discuss war policies adversely no espionage act should get them).

No state at war with another shall countenance such modes of hostility as would make mutual confidence impossible in a subsequent state of peace; such are breaches of capitulation, assassination, instigating treachery in the

hostile state, and the use of spies. (Until ten years ago we supposed that this idea of Kant was sound, and that there could be such a thing as international laws of war. Some believe it still. But have we not learned that we are no longer able to outlaw bad methods of war except by outlawing war? Military necessity knows no law. It must have all or nothing. When war is once on, no methods are too cruel, too destructive, or too treacherous. And the result Kant feared has come to pass, that in a subsequent state of peace it is hard to regain mutual confidence.)

No treaty of peace shall be held valid if made with the secret reservation of material for a future war. (Secret treaties are to be replaced by pitiless publicity.)

The civil constitution of each state shall be republican. (By republican Kant meant representative constitutional government, under whatever form. He saw clearly, and discussed in much detail, what some supporters of our present League of Nations perhaps do not see, that a league can scarcely rise in character above the dominant governments that make it up, and that the problem of securing rational world confederation abroad is largely the problem of securing liberal governments at home. To illustrate: so far as the aim of perpetual peace is concerned, Herriot we might hope to be better than Poincaré; McDonald perhaps better than Baldwin; some things possibly better than stability and silence in the White House; nothing better, possibly, than Branting in Sweden. That is to say, the problem is at bottom that of developing liberal governments, with public opinion and public will behind them.)

The law of nations shall be founded on a federation of free states. (This is not so much a condition of the goal as the goal itself, a universally free society under law.)

One final question. What positive influence has Kant's doctrine exerted in the direction of perpetual peace? I

have had no means of tracing its influence with any exactness. Some of you may know of data on this point. One result I think is clear. Kant at least gave the idea recognized respectability. I know of no earlier effort of this kind that was taken seriously. The careful and earnest work of the Abbé St. Pierre, for example, was universally laughed at. It was the fashion to call all such schemes visionary. But Kant was not laughed at. He placed his proposals upon so solid an intellectual foundation and put into them so shrewd a common sense as to compel acknowledgment of them within the field of serious discussion. Within a quarter of a century after these little books appeared a real effort, though a futile one, was made to establish a warless Europe. Now, after another hundred years, the project has again become supremely urgent, and men are striving, singularly close both to Kant's spirit and his method, toward his historic goal of perpetual peace.

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THE SOURCES AND EFFECTS IN ENGLAND OF KANT'S PHILOSOPHY  
OF BEAUTY



## THE SOURCES AND EFFECTS IN ENGLAND OF KANT'S PHILOSOPHY OF BEAUTY

WE HAVE all heard, perhaps rather too often, that it was Hume who awoke Kant from dogmatic slumber. It sometimes seems the chief claim to distinction of our chief English philosopher that he was in revenge annihilated by the German; if annihilation it can be called, to re-christen a "fiction of the mind" as "empirically real but transcendently ideal," or to substitute the postulates of the moral reason for probability as the guide of life. It is a weakness of all scholars, shared by philosophers, to emphasize our corrections of predecessors rather than our debts to them. If some carpers have thought that what Kant did to Hume's epistemology was to systematize rather than to annihilate, there would be more truth in holding that Kant's philosophy of beauty owes nearly everything but its systematic form to English writers. His debt to Baumgarten, who had inaugurated German aesthetics in 1750, is less.

Kant's pre-critical treatise *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen* of 1764 is a very dull performance, which makes such classifications as that men are sublime and women beautiful, the English character sublime and the French beautiful. It has only two claims to remembrance: one that it was about the first of his works translated into French, and the other that it contains the endearing concession *Die Coquetterie an einer sonst artigen Person ist vielleicht tadelhaft, aber doch schön.*" There are, however, striking resemblances to



Home's (Lord Kames) *Elements of Criticism* which had just been translated into German and reviewed, perhaps (Schlapp thinks) by Kant himself, in the *Königsberger gelehrten und politischen Zeitungen*.

The serious business begins in 1790 with *Die Kritik der Urtheilskraft*. Meanwhile Burke's *Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*, published in 1756, had been translated into German in 1773. Addison's papers from *The Spectator* were already translated in 1745.

In such a paper as this I can only in the briefest outline attempt to recall the salient features of Kant's theory.<sup>1</sup> His great merit is that he attacks the problem in its most essential and most difficult form. Previous writers—critics and *littérateurs* rather than philosophers—had talked about the masterpieces of painting and poetry, and it had seemed plausible to suppose with Sidney, with Boileau, with Dryden, that they in some way instructed or elevated us, and that at least one of their merits was truth to nature whether individual or typical or ideal.

Kant brushes all this loose stuff aside and goes straight to the point. He sees that there is a beauty of form which imitates nothing, teaches us nothing about things and satisfies neither desire nor the moral law—we have no interest in the object's existence. This he explains as a feeling that in apprehending certain forms (i. e., spatial patterns or arrangements of sounds) our faculties of apprehension are set in a harmonious play without any guiding concept as to what the object ought to be. The object then seems to be designed, but designed for no purpose except our apprehension; it exhibits *Zweckmässigkeit ohne Zweck*. This feeling of free harmony between our apprehensive powers we demand should be shared by all men. It cannot be demonstrated, since no concept of the thing's

<sup>1</sup> I have attempted to deal less inadequately both with Kant's general view and with the concept of sublimity in *The Theory of Beauty*, Metheun (London), 2nd edit., 1923. Authorities are there cited.





A PORTRAIT BUST OF KANT  
(Made in 1795 by J. Mattersberger)

nature or purpose is involved; but only so far as we are certain that our feeling can be shared do we have the proper aesthetic satisfaction, which is no sensuous, subjective pleasure (like the pleasure in a pure tone or color), but a delight in the uncovenanted mercy that not only in thought, as we expected, but in apprehension are we one spirit.

Such is the central thought of Kant's aesthetic. Before proceeding to criticize or to appreciate it we may notice that Home in his last chapter says that there is a rule for taste though a "subjective" one, so that, though there is no disputing, yet there is good and bad taste. Kant uses almost the same words (§§8, 17, 20). Hutcheson, one of Kant's favorite authors, in his *Enquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty* (1725, translated 1762) had said that we speak of a *sense* of beauty because it is immediate and necessary and springs from no intellectual principle though it is quite distinct from interest. Its simplest principle is unity in variety. We cannot argue from this regularity of form to a designing cause, yet the fact that any sense for beauty should, out of the infinite possibilities, find an appropriate object, does suggest the idea of design. Accordingly he distinguishes the beautiful from the good, the useful and the perfect. Addison in his papers on the imagination in *The Spectator* (411, *et seq.*) ascribes beauty to "anything that hath such a variety or regularity as may seem the effect of Design in what we call works of Chance." This he thinks gives us a pleasure of imagination "not so gross as that of Sense nor so refined as that of Understanding." "We immediately assent to the beauty of an object without enquiring into the particular causes or occasions of it."

So far then there is little that is original in Kant. True, he has made such good use of his borrowings as to acquire a prescriptive right in them, though it would have been

convenient if, contrary to the custom of his day, he had cited their source. But not all that he borrows is of equal value. If a theory of beauty is to have any value, it must as Socrates taught us in the *Hippias Major*, hold good of all beauties and not only of some. Kant finds that his formula is not plausibly applicable to beauties other than those of pure form, and therefore, following the usual method of philosophers, denies that they are really beauties at all. He distinguishes the beauty of pure or abstract form, which he believes he has explained and which he calls free beauty (*pulchritudo vaga*), from (a) the beauty of all organic forms (and of architecture), which consists merely in adaptation to purpose, and from (b) the beauty of art, which consists in good imitation. In both of these there is a concept or ideal to be satisfied and so we get only *pulchritudo adhaerens*, or dependent beauty. Home had distinguished beauty proper, which consists in "regularity, uniformity, proportion, order, simplicity" from relative beauty which supposes consideration of an end (ch. III). Hutcheson had distinguished pure beauty from the relative beauty which consists in good imitation. So once more Kant seems to have borrowed, and here perhaps independence would have been the best policy. In his own day these sources, and others like them, would be so familiar to most readers that to acknowledge them specifically, even had it been the custom of the time, would be unnecessary. But, now that they are too often forgotten, we are in danger of crediting Kant with an originality in error which he does not deserve.

For surely this is all quite false. The beauty of painting and poetry does not consist in their skillful imitation. Nor does the beauty of organic forms consist in their adaptation for life-preserving functions. Nor is the beauty of either essentially different from that of arabesque. Kant's own instances are sufficient to condemn him. He tells us



(§48) that in calling a woman's form beautiful we simply *mean* that in it nature represents the purposes of a woman's form. This is no more true than that we find other animals beautiful in proportion to their fitness to survive or churches in proportion to their acoustic convenience.

To what a pass have the holders of such a theory brought themselves! The only pure beauty, that is the only beauty which their theory even professes to explain, is the beauty of natural arabesques, for instance ripple-marks in sand and water or possibly cloud-patterns (with abstraction from what Kant calls the "merely sensuous richness of color") and natural sound-patterns, if there be any, which do not depend on the "merely sensuous richness of notes." The instances he himself gives of flowers, birds, sea-shells, are manifestly illegitimate as being organic. Yet it is clear that nobody would ever think of sand-ripples or even of clouds in a dull grey sky as typical instances of beauty. And, so far, our theorists would have to hold that anything more exciting is mere approval of clever imitation or of apt adaptation or else a sensuous titillation of the optic or aural nerves. But there was a way out; a way which Kant adopted, though, perhaps to his credit, he did not invent. Besides the beautiful there is the sublime. The sublime is explained as the exact opposite of the beautiful. In the most characteristic aesthetic experiences, far from merely noting a certain easy working of his perceptive mechanism, man is overwhelmed and carried away by something stronger than himself; like Socrates he is ἥττων τῶν καλῶν. Kant himself, as we know, felt for the starry heavens an awe and reverence only comparable with that which he felt for the moral law; and surely that could not be just because the points of light were so disposed in a dark background as to make apprehension easy. Nor could it even be because the ease of his apprehension was universal to mankind. For so would be the difficulty of apprehending

anything in a fog—which would really be a good instance of what Kant thinks happens in sublimity.

He ascribes sublimity to those objects which gratify us by their very formlessness, their very repugnance to our faculties, their check to our vital powers (§23). And we may well ask how this can be. Kant thinks in two ways. The “mathematically sublime” is found in objects which by their vast size or by the iteration of uniform features suggest infinity as their only standard of measurement. So in the very act of violating all our faculties of perception they remind us of a super-sensuous faculty, reason, which is not inadequate for an aspiration to infinity itself. Such sublimity, Kant says, is found in nature alone; so I often wondered why the only instances he gives of it are St. Peter’s and the pyramids, until I noticed that these are two instances of sublimity given by Home.

The “dynamically sublime” is not a great object but a great force, and it stimulates us to bethink ourselves not of a faculty adequate to estimating infinite force but of that moral faculty, by which we could be just though the heavens should fall. Yet we only appreciate it when we are not actually in danger.

Treating of sublimity Kant quotes Burke’s essay, from which he distinguishes his own view as less physiological, but does not mention other predecessors. Burke said that “what is in any sort terrible is sublime but our safety is a condition of our pleasure in it.” Natural sublimity causes a sort of astonishment in the soul, when all its motions are suspended with some degree of horror.” He goes on to say that it need not be great, but that vagueness or vastness can be sublime by suggesting the terrors of infinity and eternity, and that it can be suggested by iteration of the uniform parts in an object. But for Burke nothing is so sublime as the power of God.

One of the main differences of this from Kant is that the latter makes the sublimity which depends not on force or terror but on size into a distinct kind. It is noteworthy that a spirited controversy was going on in England as to whether the sublime consisted in terror, as thought by Burke, or in size. Home had said that the heightening or enlarging of beauty produces a new emotion called sublimity or grandeur and instanced the passage quoted by "Longinus" where Moses, "no ordinary man," records that God said, "Let there be light" and there was light. Here, says Home, emotion of sublimity "is merely a flash which vanishing immediately, gives way to humility and veneration." Hugh Blair in his third lecture on Rhetoric (1783) says that the "Sublime . . . produces a sort of internal elevation and expansion. . . . The emotion is certainly delightful, but altogether of the serious kind; a degree of awfulness and solemnity, even approaching to severity. . . . All vastness produces the impression of sublimity. Hence infinite space, endless numbers and eternal duration fill the mind with great ideas. . . . But many objects appear sublime which have no relation to space at all. . . . Great power and strength exerted, always raise sublime ideas." This recognition of the two kinds is exactly Kant's.

But, after all, these English writers mostly carry back to Addison, and it matters little whether Kant derived from him through them, through Bodmer and Breitinger, or direct. In the essays on the imagination, Addison thought that this faculty is pleased with three kinds of object, the Great, the Uncommon and the Beautiful. His account of the beautiful has already been summarized. Of the Great he instances Wide Champains, Deserts, Mountains, for "Our Imagination loves to be filled with an object or to grasp at anything that is too big for its capacity." The result is "a delightful stillness and amazement of the soul. . . . The mind of man naturally hates anything that looks

like a restraint upon it." And like Kant after him he instances the starry heavens, and suggests that the final cause of such pleasures is that we may find our complete satisfaction in God only. For sublimity is to be found rather in nature than in art, though ancient architecture "strikes in with the natural greatness of the soul." There is one parallel where the resemblances of thought, diction and illustration are so close that they could scarcely be the result of coincidence. Addison says in his tenth essay that nothing is so pleasing to our Imagination as to enlarge itself by degrees, comparing the body of a man successively to the earth, the sun, the solar-system, space; for the understanding opens infinite spaces to us, but Imagination soon comes to a stand. . . . "This defect of Imagination may not be in the soul itself, but as it acts in conjunction with the body." Kant says (§26): "A tree, whose height we measure with reference to the height of a man, at all events gives a standard for a mountain; and if this were a mile high it would serve as a unit for the number expressive of the earth's diameter so that the latter might be made intuitable. The earth's diameter would supply a unit for the known planetary system and this for the milky way and so on *ad infinitum*." All is Addison's except the style. For the rest, the only common source of which I am aware is the *De Sublimitate*, and the resemblances of Kant to Addison are much greater than those of either to that.<sup>2</sup> I venture to think that Kant's opposition between sublimity and beauty is as ill-founded as that between inorganic natural form on the one hand and art with organic nature on the other. This I have argued in the work already cited. Our present point is the genesis of the distinction.

<sup>2</sup> The recent researches of Professor J. G. Robertson of the University of London (*The Genesis of Romantic Criticism*, Cambridge, 1923) show a greater effect of the Italians, especially Muratori, upon Bodmer than I had suspected. He agrees however that their influence upon Addison was probably not considerable. He does not consider Home or Kant.



There are then few original ideas in Kant's aesthetic. He has systematized and hardened distinctions and oppositions current in English for the preceding eighty years, and this exaggeration results in a *reductio ad absurdum*. Yet in thus carrying to their logical extreme the tendencies of his time he seemed to meet its needs. His distinction between beauty and sublimity was taken up by philosophers, Hegel in chief and after him a host of Germans, and also by poets and critics: Schiller, Goethe, Coleridge and Wordsworth. So that if the opposition is false we must at least account for its success.

It is a platitude that art cannot stand still. Artists either imitate their predecessors and elaborate traditional themes with stock mannerisms—and then we speak of a period of decay—or they discover new themes and new technical methods, and then we speak, according to our years, of development or of anarchy. The inventors of such new beauty naturally enough, in their enthusiasm, decry the old as dull and ugly—because its stale repetition would be so. The critics and philosophers listen to them, at least so far as to accept the view that here must be two quite different kinds of beauty: the old and familiar, which, because they understand and appreciate it, seems amenable to the old definition, and a new one, whose strangeness half attracts, half irritates and wholly puzzles them, and for which they think a new definition must be sought. Possibly the *De Sublimitate* owes its distinction between a grandeur to be found in wild nature or in sublime poetry and the less troubling perfection of typical Attic art to a phase of this kind. Whenever it could have been written there may already have been some early premonition of the radical change from what we should call classical to what Riegl calls Late Roman Art. Certainly the renaissance produced in Scaliger, Elizabethan poetry its apologists in Sidney and Samuel Daniel, the romantic revival



its defenders in Coleridge, Wordsworth and Shelley. But the revival of romance had begun already with Addison, who is one of the first to use the term eulogistically and with just our own meaning. For in 1712 he calls "finely Romantick" Milton's account of Thammuz:

"Whose annual wound in Lebanon allured  
The Syrian damsels to lament his fate,  
In am'rous ditties all a summer day,  
While smooth Adonis from his native rock  
Ran purple to the Sea, supposed with Blood  
Of Thammuz yearly wounded: the love tale  
Infected Sion's daughters with like lust.  
Whose wanton passions in the sacred Porch  
Ezekiel saw."

and immediately he goes on to give as an instance of sublimity, Milton's:

"Millions of flaming swords drawn from the thighs  
Of mighty Cherubim; the sudden blaze  
Far round illumined Hell."

All through the rest of the eighteenth century was waged this contest of Romantic Sublimity *versus* Classical Beauty, between this new terrifying beauty of wildness, monstrosity and violence and the old beauty, familiar and tamed, of regularity, smoothness, attraction.

Who was likely to feel the antithesis so sharply as Kant? He was born in 1724, just after the death of Addison and just before the birth of Cowper, about the time of Voltaire's visit to England. He grew up under the francophil *régime* of Frederick the Great, who was the disciple of Voltaire and whose rationalistic and correct French verse Kant quotes. He practically never left Koenigsberg and never saw a great mountain or, I suppose, a great original work of architecture, sculpture or painting. He wrote the

*Kritik der Urtheilskraft* in 1790 when he was sixty-six, eight years after the publication of Rousseau's *Confessions*, and in the year of Wordsworth's tour through revolutionary France to Switzerland, of Turner's first exhibition in the Royal Academy, and of the first publication of Goethe's *Faust*, when *Götz*, *Werther* and much of Schiller's work were already well known.

How could a man living in such an epoch and with such a training be anything but stupefied by the collision of the traditional beauties of his boyhood with those which jostled their way into the astonished presence of his age? The books which he quotes for illustrations of the sublime are *Voyages Dans les Alpes*, by De Saussure and *Lettres sur l'Egypte*, by Savary; both on countries as different as possible from East Prussia. His own instances are mountains, boiling cataracts, overhanging and threatening precipices; none of which could he ever have seen. He also mentions tempests and raging seas. As he lived twenty miles from the Baltic, it is just possible, in spite of his notoriously sedentary habits, that he may have seen a storm at sea. His sense of *genie*, then, in dealing with the new literature and the new taste in "horrid" scenery is, I think, easily accounted for. He owed his ideas of beauty to the polite polished, rationalistic poetry of France. He owed his ideas of sublimity to English writers fed on Shakespeare and Milton. Naturally, he instances, as I have noted, the French character as beautiful, the English as sublime.

It was by Kant that this dim feeling of change, of revolution indeed, in poetic method and in taste for scenery, which had been stirring in the European and especially the English mind ever since Addison, was brought to acute self-consciousness in Coleridge and Wordsworth. Coleridge in his impressionable youth read Kant and seemed to find there the philosophic justification of a hostility he was himself feeling between the older rules or habits of

taste and his own poetic impulse. He communicated his discovery to Wordsworth, and they both in their critical writings adopted the Kantian phraseology for a contrast which they might perhaps have found just as well expressed in the less technical but more sensitive words of Addison. Had they gone back to the fountain-head, they would have felt the continuity of development more and seen that in fulfilling the old prophets they had no need to stone them. The England of Pope and Dryden had always loved Milton and Shakespeare; so romance and sublimity were no such innovation in her poetry as they might seem to a German philosopher of French culture.

"My mind," writes Coleridge to Thelwall in 1797, "aches to know something one, great and indivisible. Only in faith of that do rocks, waterfalls, mountains or caverns give the sense of sublimity. But in this faith *all things* counterfeit infinity." And in his marginal notes on a copy of Herder's *Kalligone*, he expressly refers this formula to Kant. Wordsworth in *The Recluse*, echoes Kant, as he no doubt heard him quoted by Coleridge:

"Stern was the face of nature; we rejoiced  
In that stern countenance, for our souls thence drew  
A feeling of their strength."

and his sister Dorothy gets even closer to the original when describing in her *Journal* the Falls of Reichenbach.

I do not feel all this to be a matter of merely antiquarian interest, for it seems to me that the same sort of thing is happening today. There have recently been some remarkable innovations in pictorial technique, mainly in the direction of a revolt from naturalism to formalism, as the poetry of Kant's day revolted from formalism to naturalism. And corresponding to the rediscovery of wild scenery in his time are the archaeological researches and discoveries of our own. Now the art-critics and historians

and archaeologists who reflect on these new movements and new discoveries are really in a position analogous to that of Kant, but as it were reversed. He found a new art and a new taste in nature, which neglected the formalities and smoothness of his youth and yearned after the wildness and mystery of passion, of deserts, of mountains and of stars. Today Riegl, Wölflin, Worringer, Roger Fry and Hulme find a new art and a new archaeology which reveal a stylized beauty in the unlife-like, the geometrical, the unworldly. And it is the undying merit of Kant that he laid his finger on this eternal dialectic of beauty, this constant swing of the pendulum between form and content, pattern and passion. Like him, our contemporary critics find a popular philosophy—in their case the psychology of the *Einfühling* school—applicable enough to the art of their fathers but inadequate to their own. Like him they make the error of concluding that there must be two philosophies, one for the old, another for the new. Yet if the old philosophy be really inadequate it must be abandoned for a better, since a philosophy of beauty which only explains some beauties stands condemned. Nor have they Kant's excuse. In his day no acceptable philosophy of art existed and it was not his fault if he could not invent one. Today there is a philosophy of art which, if not ultimate, is competent to cover what beauty may be in the art of Cézanne, of Gauguin, of the Cubists, of the Assyrians, the Egyptians, the Minoans and the Byzantines. Instead of telling us, as Lipps did, that aesthetic experience is feeling our life in the life of the object—which did well enough for naturalistic and nature-loving art but not at all for formal and pessimistic religious art—Croce tells us that beauty is always and only the expression in sensible imagery of an individual emotion, of every movement of attraction *or repulsion* in the human spirit.



It is probably to Kant even more than to Hegel himself that Croce would acknowledge a debt. Kant with an unerring insight for fundamental problems first made clear that beauty is not truth nor morality nor sensation; that taste has its purity which is yet subjective. And with unsurpassed acumen he discriminated the two factors of all beauty—form and matter, expression and feeling; though he made the mistake of treating them not as elements in every beauty but as two kinds of beauty, or rather as beauty proper, which was pure form, and sublimity, which was purely formless feeling, unexpressed and unembodied, merely suggested to our minds by such formless and (he himself says) disgusting objects as a stormy sea. He should have bethought himself that form without feeling is empty, and feeling not expressed in form is blind.

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KANT'S COPERNICAN REVOLUTION



## KANT'S COPERNICAN REVOLUTION

AT THE close of the Middle Ages realism and nominalism were contending for the throne of philosophy. Although the leaders of the new era proudly set their faces against the past and insisted on the complete reconstruction of philosophical thought, the old issues reappeared under new names, and when the young Kant entered upon the scene he found the battle raging between rationalism and empiricism. He sided at first with the Leibnizian-Wolffian host, which had gained the supremacy in the German universities; and it may be said that in a certain sense he remained true to his first love all his life long. But his was not the mind to be lulled to sleep by a metaphysical system, and we can see how his thought developed, slowly and laboriously, by dint of hard intellectual labor. In his second period we note in him a growing scepticism with regard to the current rationalistic proofs for the existence of God, the unity of the world, and the substantiality of the soul. His study of English empiricism doubtless exercised an influence upon his thinking in these matters, but it must not be forgotten that he was a mathematician and physicist and a student of Newton; it is easy to imagine the attitude of a mind grounded in science toward the uncritical method of the dogmatic systems.<sup>1</sup> At any rate,

<sup>1</sup> It must be kept in mind that Kant was well versed in the study of mathematics and the natural sciences, that he taught mathematics and physics, and anthropology and physical geography, that his first work (1747) was a discussion of the *notion of force*, in which he tried to show the superiority of the dynamic view over the current mechanical theory. As early as 1755 he published his book, *Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*, in which he propounded what is now called the nebular hypothesis or the Kant-Laplacian theory, a work which appeared forty-one years before the celebrated treatise of the Frenchman Laplace (*Exposition du système du monde*). His

he became thoroughly dissatisfied with both the leading schools and looked upon their contentions as vain. It is apparent from Kant's *Critique* that this dissatisfaction was widespread even in his own country, and that it was particularly marked with respect to dogmatic metaphysics as represented in Germany. He tells us in the prefaces to the first and second editions of the *Critique of Pure Reason*<sup>2</sup> that the one-time almighty and revered queen of all the sciences is now, like Hecuba, despised and 'deserted—"with none so poor to do her reverence." Under the administration of the dogmatists, he goes on to say, her reign had been despotic, but it has now gradually degenerated, through internal wars, into complete anarchy; and the sceptics, a type of nomads, who have a contempt for any steady cultivation of the soil, are disturbing the civil union from time to time. He seems to be especially irritated by the behavior of metaphysics, evidently because her plan of campaign appeared to him such an utterly hopeless one.

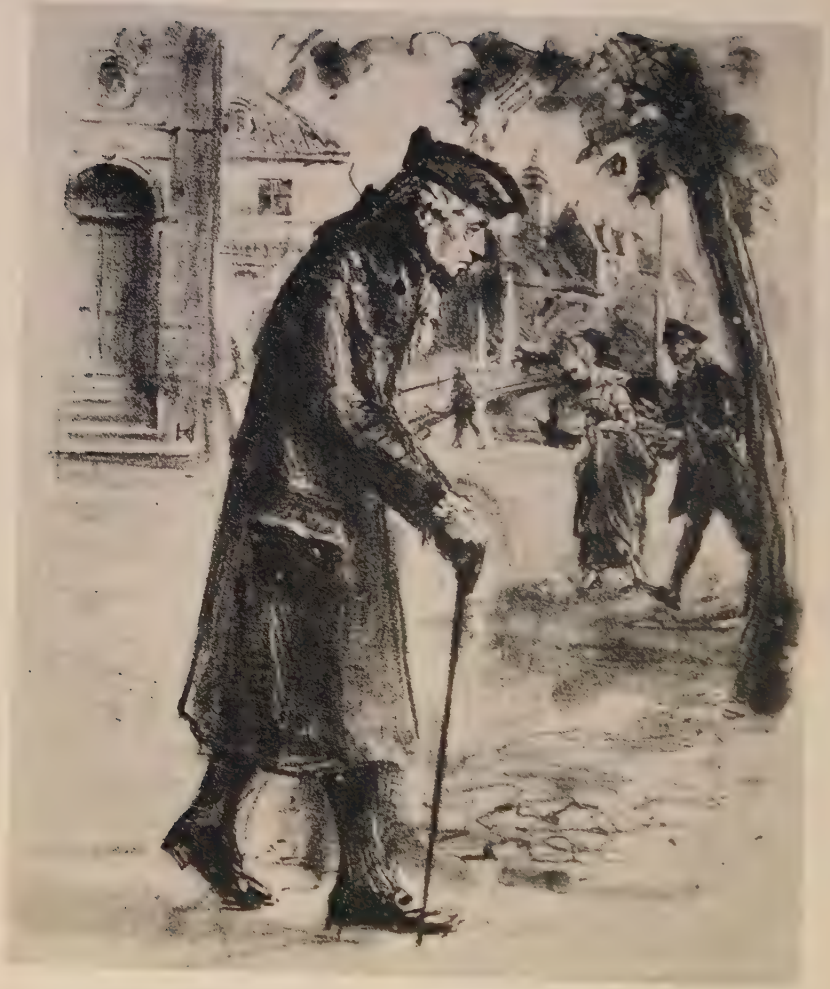
Kant once said that it was his fate to be in love with metaphysics, and perhaps this is the reason why he censures her conduct so unsparingly. In metaphysics, he declares, reason constantly comes to a dead stop, even when it attempts to understand *a priori* those laws which the commonest experience confirms. Metaphysics is a field for exercising one's powers in sham battles, a *terrain* upon which never a single combatant has been able to gain even the slightest ground. And why has metaphysics never succeeded in discovering a sure road to *Wissen-*

doctor's thesis bore the title *Meditationum quarundam de igne succincta delineatio*, 1755. Helmholtz declared that by inclination, endowment, and preference Kant was a natural scientist. Adickes in his new book, *Kant als Naturwissenschaftler*, holds that "he was and remained all his life long a dilettante in natural-scientific matters, indeed an extremely well-informed and mathematically trained dilettante, but yet when all is said a mere dilettante." Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that he was a philosopher of nature whose whole point of view and method was greatly influenced by his scientific studies.

<sup>2</sup> The passages quoted in this article are, for the most part, taken from these prefaces. Occasional use has been made of Max Müller's translation of the *Critique*.







IMMANUEL KANT ON HIS DAILY WALK  
(A Recent Drawing by Heinrich Wolff)

*schaft*? Why has nature visited upon our reason the restless striving to find this path as one of the most important concerns of life? We have little cause to trust our reason if it not only deserts us in one of the most important phases of our desire for knowledge but cajoles us with vain hopes and in the end defrauds us.

Against the sciences of his time Kant has no such indictment to bring: indeed, they are not shallow, they even surpass their former reputation of thoroughness. He regards his age as the real age of criticism, and he insists that everything must submit to criticism, even religion and legislation, for these cannot gain universal respect unless they are subjected to the free and public examination of reason.

Rationalistic metaphysics is not the only target of Kant's shafts. The Lockean empiricism, too, he is convinced, has turned out to be a failure. It once seemed, he says, that a certain "physiology" of the human understanding had made an end of all this anarchy, and decided the question of the legitimacy of the claims of knowledge. But, he asserts, its pedigree has proved to be fictitious, and the old dogmatism and contempt for *Wissenschaft* have returned. Kant knew perfectly well that English empiricism had ended in bankruptcy in Hume's scepticism. Hume had aroused him from his dogmatic slumbers and taught him that all dogmatism—the procedure of pure reason without previous criticism—was impossible, whether it appeared in the heavy *a priori* cloak of rationalism or in the light psychological dress of empiricism. We may say that Locke had shut up man with his own ideas, and that Hume had walled up the windows of his prison, leaving him *alone* with his "impressions" and their faint ideas, confined to the task of bringing some slight order into "the heap or collection of ideas" called the mind. The soul had been analyzed away; there was noth-

ing left of the whole world but ideas, each one "distinct and different and distinguishable" from every other one. Knowledge of matters of fact was limited to this atomic world of mind—at best a mere probability and a guide to practice, but not real knowledge. In Hume the theory of knowledge came to the conclusion that there was no knowledge: rational theology, rational cosmology, and rational psychology were found to be pseudo-sciences dealing with things about which one can know nothing at all or with things which can nowhere exist. Reason had examined itself out of existence; in its eagerness to discover its roots it had sapped its own life.

That was the situation of philosophy as Kant saw it at close range. "And so today," he says, "we have indifference, the mother of chaos and night in the sciences." This indifference, however, he adds, is not the result of frivolity; it is a challenge to reason to take up anew the most difficult of all concerns, namely, self-knowledge, and to establish a tribunal which shall secure to reason its just claims. He never doubted for a moment that there was an *a priori* element in mathematics and physics—the two great sciences of his age—that both yielded universal and necessary knowledge. To discredit them seemed to him a fantastic enterprise, and yet he was sure that rationalism, no less than empiricism, was following a false trail. And though he uttered a plague on both their philosophical houses, he saw elements of truth in each. He has been called the *Alles-Zermalmer*, the All-Destroyer, but nothing was farther from his thought than wholesale destruction. Hume, indeed, had lived by the sword and had perished by the sword. It is true, Kant came to destroy the pretensions of *pseudo*-knowledge, but that was only the beginning of his task—a task which the Scotch sceptic had, in part, already performed for him. As a matter of fact, he came not to destroy but to fulfill. All previous attempts at

constructing metaphysics, he informs us, were failures, but we should not let the difficulties and obstacles that lie in our path here frighten us. The *Critique* was to be "the necessary preparation in support of a *thoroughly scientific system* of metaphysics"; it was to show not only what we cannot know but what we can know. We must not forget that the *Alles-Zermalmer* also wrote the *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können*, the *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft*, *Zur Grundlegung der Metaphysik der Sitten*, and the *Metaphysik der Sitten*, in order to illustrate possible and legitimate types of metaphysics. He called this much-abused member of the philosophical family "the fairest child of reason"; she was "the real and true philosophy." In his work *On the Progress of Metaphysics since Leibniz and Wolff*, he says: "The transcendental philosophy has for its object the founding of a metaphysic, whose purpose, as the chief end of pure reason, is intended to lead reason beyond the limits of the sensible world to the field of the supersensible." The very name of metaphysics, he reminds us, suggests this function. What alone the *Critique* did destroy, he himself points out, were the roots of materialism, atheism, fatalism, free-thinking, disbelief, the extravagances of fancy, superstition, and also (subjective) idealism and scepticism.

There is another point to be emphasized in this connection. The *Critique* is by no means opposed even to the dogmatic procedure of reason in pure knowledge as *Wissenschaft*. Such a procedure, he says, must always be dogmatic; indeed, we must not forget that the *Critique* itself is dogmatic in this sense; it has absolute faith in the power of reason to reason about itself. Pure science must strictly demonstrate its judgments by sure *a priori* principles; but it is opposed to dogmatism, that is, to the presumption that we can get along solely with a pure knowl-



edge of concepts according to principles *without inquiry into the manner and the authority by which reason has arrived at such a point*. Dogmatism is the dogmatic procedure of pure reason without a previous criticism of its own power.

All this does not betray the temper of the iconoclast: the man who declared that he had to destroy knowledge—that is, pseudo-knowledge—in order to leave room for faith, was not an *Alles-Zermalmer*. And the history of the great philosophical movement of which he was the intellectual father is a living argument against the theory that he came to destroy and not to fulfill. It has been said by a recent German writer that Kant had removed the ovaries of metaphysics, and that the one-time queen has been barren ever since. Against this view we have only to call to mind that never in the history of thought, since Socrates, has a philosophy shown such fertility in producing metaphysical systems as that fathered by Kant. It may be true that some of the children are illegitimate, but that would not prove the barrenness of metaphysics, but only that she had gone astray.

As was said before, Kant held mathematics and physics in high respect; in them we reach a measure of genuine knowledge. The question now arises: to what do these sciences owe their prestige and success? Even among the Egyptians, mathematics, for example, was still groping in the dark. How did it happen, Kant asks, that this science became what it is: incontestable knowledge? The answer to this question gave him his clue and led to what seemed a complete change of standpoint, a thorough-going revolution in the field of philosophy. The happy thought of a single individual, he says, brought about a revolution in mathematics; for the first man who demonstrated the properties of the isosceles triangle saw a new light (*dem ging ein Licht auf*). From that moment on, the sure course of



a science was marked out and prescribed for all time and in infinite directions. For this pathfinder discovered that his task was not to trace out (*nachzuspiiren*) what he saw in the figure or even to examine the pure notion of the triangle in order to deduce from it the properties of the same. No, a new light flashed upon him; his happy thought was a creative thought: it consisted in creating such a figure, and then drawing out of it the necessary implications of his own thought. "He saw that he had to produce (by construction) what he had himself, according to concepts *a priori*, placed into that figure and represented in it, so that in order to know anything with certainty *a priori*, he must not attribute to that figure anything beyond what necessarily follows from what he has himself placed into it, in accordance with the concept." And so, too, when Galileo let balls of a particular weight, which he had determined himself, roll down an inclined plane, or Torricelli made the air carry a weight, which he had previously determined to be equal to that of a definite volume of water, a new light flashed on all students of nature. They understood that reason had insight only into what she herself produces according to her own plan, and that she must move forward (*vorangehen*) with the principles of her judgments, according to a fixed law, and compel nature to answer her questions, but not let herself be led by nature, as it were, in leading strings. For otherwise, observations which are made accidentally and not according to a prearranged plan will not form any necessary connection according to law—which is the very thing reason seeks and requires. Reason must approach nature with its principles in one hand and experiment in the other—the experiment thought out by reason in accordance with these principles. That is, unless we approach nature with such principles, we shall not be able to find her laws. We must know what we are looking for, we must have some

hypothesis, otherwise we shall not find anything. Pasteur did not accidentally stumble upon his germ-theory by a hap-hazard observation of diseases. He did not discover the cause of anthrax until he had an idea of what to look for. Columbus started out on his westward journey guided by a theory: he did not wander around upon the ocean in hap-hazard fashion, hoping, like Micawber, for something to turn up (Micawber, by the way, never did find anything), but made straight for India, as he thought. The discovery of the West Indies was an accident—but his theory was true nonetheless, for he *was* on his way to India.

It is true, Kant says, reason must be instructed by nature but not as if reason were a pupil that lets his teacher (nature) tell him whatever she pleases, but as if reason were an appointed judge who compels the witnesses to answer the questions which he himself puts to them. And so, “even the science of physics entirely owes the beneficial revolution in its character to the happy thought that we ought to seek in nature (and not fictitiously to ascribe to it) whatever reason must learn from nature, and could not know by itself, and that we must do this *in accordance with what reason itself has placed into nature*. Thus only has the study of nature entered on the secure method of a science, after having for centuries done nothing but grope in the dark.”

A revolution made mathematics and natural science what they now are. It was a similar happy thought when Copernicus, contrary to common experience, assumed the spectator to be turning round and the stars to be at rest. This was only an hypothesis but it was made a certainty by the discovery of the laws of motion which determine the movements of the heavenly bodies. Indeed, it was on the Copernican assumption that Kepler proceeded in his investigations and verified the hypothesis. With the discovery of the law of gravitation by Newton—another

happy thought, Kant might have added—these laws themselves were subsumed under an all-embracing principle. This force would have forever remained undiscovered, if Copernicus had not dared to seek the observed movements, not in the heavenly bodies but in the spectator.

Kant was thoroughly convinced that he himself had brought about a similar revolution in metaphysics: that on him, too, a new light had flashed. Just as Copernicus imagines the spectator moving and the stars at rest, so Kant tries the experiment, in metaphysics, of presupposing that, in the perceiving of objects, it is the objects that conform to perception and not perception that conforms to the objects.

The ordinary view is that our mind passively receives the objects, that what we call our sense-experience, for example, is something forced upon us from without. If this is so, then we can know nothing of the world of objects *a priori*, we can make no *universal and necessary* judgments concerning them; we are simply dependent upon the impressions which we receive from without. Let us, however, imagine that the object (as the object of the senses) conforms to the nature of our faculty of perception, that what we call our experience is something dependent on our own minds, something already *fashioned, organized*, by the mind according to the mind's laws: then we can have an *a priori* knowledge of what we experience. Knowing the nature of the mind, the universal and necessary *a priori* forms of the mind, we can know its products, the world of our experience. And we may go further: in order that our perceptions may become cognitions, the subject must relate them (as *Vorstellungen*, ideas) to something as the object of these ideas, and determine this object by means of these ideas. I can assume that the objects, or, which is the same, the experiences in which they are known (as given objects) conform to the concept. Copernicus

placed the sun in the center of the planetary system; Kant enthroned mind in the center of the system of knowledge.

This "happy thought" leads to important results. Experience is already a mode of knowing which requires *Verstand*: it is organized according to the structure of the mind. For that reason we can know *a priori* our world of experience; to know, to understand, means just this organizing. It is a rational experience because we ourselves have rationalized it. This explains the universality and necessity in our experience. Mathematics is universal and necessary knowledge because it is a creation of the mind, of the perceiving and understanding mind—the revelation of the mind's own functioning. And so we understand only what the mind does: the mind understands only itself. We understand space-, time-, and causal relations because the mind relates things spatially, temporally, and causally. Experience itself is in this sense the work of an organizing mind. Without a relating mind there could be no experience whatever: without an identifying, comparing, discriminating, synthetizing mind, there could be neither experience nor scientific knowledge of it. Synthetic knowledge *a priori* of nature is possible only on the presupposition that consciousness is itself synthetic; and that the synthetic nature of consciousness cannot be grounded in the "stuff" but only in the form (that is, in the laws of synthesis).<sup>3</sup> Geometry as synthetic knowledge *a priori* is possible on the assumption that consciousness is in its very nature synthetic. To Kant *pure* experience would be no experience at all. Mere staring at the world would not be perceiving. An experience that is not understood at all, not even understood as strange and baffling, would not be a fact of experience, whatever else it might be. A mind that merely registered sensations would be like a photographic plate, that is, mindless, knowledge-less. The quest

<sup>3</sup> See Karl Groos, *Der Aufbau der Systeme*, pp. 83ff.



for a pure experience is a quest for intellectual blindness and death. If the finder did nothing but recognize it as a *pure* experience, he would still be interpreting it, and it would no longer be pure.

Whatever events we may become aware of, we shall always identify and differentiate, call the same and different, hold together in concepts, arrange in a space and time order, connect as substance and accident, cause and effect, or in the relation of reciprocal action. We shall always conceive them in their all-ness, some-ness, and one-ness, affirm and deny something of them, and we shall always pronounce our judgments in the form of apodictic, categorical, or possible statements. To know means to place everything in an order which the perceiving and thinking mind creates. Whatever happens, be it only a whim, an illusion, an hallucination, a dream, a fancy, will find its place in a setting.

Kant reminds us that the *Critique of Pure Reason* is a treatise of the *method* and not a system of science itself. Nevertheless, it outlines the entire scope of the system of science, both with regard to its limits as well as with regard to its entire inner structure. Pure speculative reason can and must appraise its own power, and it can also enumerate completely the manifold ways of presenting the problems themselves. For nothing can be added to the objects in *a priori* knowledge except what the thinking subject draws out of itself. Moreover, the speculative reason is a wholly abstracted isolated unity so far as its principles are concerned, a self-existent unity, in which every member exists for the sake of all the others and all the others for the sake of the one, as in an organism; and no principle can with certainty be taken in *one* relation but must at the same time be examined in its complete relation to the entire pure use of reason.



Metaphysics is thus brought to the sure road of science by the *Critique*. Since it has only to do with *principles* and the *limitations of their use*, it can embrace the whole field of knowledge and complete its work, offering to posterity a stock of knowledge which can never be increased. Metaphysics is the only one of the sciences which may promise itself such completion. Nothing is left to posterity but to arrange everything in a didactic way, according to its purposes, without increasing the content at all. For it is nothing but the inventory of all our possessions, acquired through pure reason systematically ordered. Nothing can escape us here, because what reason draws wholly out of itself cannot be concealed, for it is simply brought to light by reason as soon as we have discovered the common principle of reason. If anything remains to be done, Kant boldly asserts, nothing has been done.

Kant had the sublime faith that he had opened the road to knowledge, that he had discovered the sure path to *Wissenschaft* for which reason has been seeking but groping in the dark. All the errors are now at an end which have divided reason against itself in its experiential use. His Copernican revolution has enabled him *to specify all the problems according to principles*; he has at last discovered the cause of reason's misunderstanding of itself. It is true, he goes on to say, the answers have not turned out as the dogmatists' extravagant desire for knowledge may have expected, for only magic could have satisfied this desire, and these arts, he confesses, he does not possess. The duty of philosophy was to abolish the phantom which sprang from misconceptions. He defends himself against the charge of immodesty, pointing out that his claims are more modest than those of every program-maker who asseverates that he has demonstrated the simple nature of the soul and the necessity of a first beginning of the universe. Such things, he admits, are beyond his powers, for he has only

to do with reason itself and *its* pure thinking; and the complete knowledge of pure thinking he finds in himself. Yes, even the commonest logic offers an example "that all its simple acts may be completely and systematically enumerated": only, in the *Critique* the question is raised, How much can I do with all this "if all the matter and help of experience are taken away from me?" The main question is, What and how can the pure understanding itself know, independent of all experience; and not: How is the power to think itself possible? We see how thoroughly the rationalistic ideal has permeated his whole mode of thought, and how profound was his faith in the organic structure of thought. If Kant had stopped at this point, we should have had the following result. Our ordinary scientific knowledge is, so far as its *form* is concerned, the creation of the intellect: it prescribes its laws to nature instead of being determined by nature. We learn from experience because we have read into experience the forms and categories of the mind. This kind of knowledge is limited entirely to experience: it is knowledge based on perception, and it is valid knowledge because it tells us no more about experience than we have put into it. And from the principles which we have discovered we can develop a great system of knowledge, an interrelated logical whole, in which every legitimate problem and every legitimate solution will find its appointed place; and we can also fix the limits beyond which this kind of knowledge cannot go, indeed, even describe all the fallacies to which it is subject. If we had time, we could complete this work so that future generations would find nothing more to do in this field. But Kant does not stop here. Complete though such a system of knowledge would be, it would tell us nothing whatever of the real world, of the things as they really are in themselves, for the perceiving mind cannot pierce the veil of experience and penetrate to the world which

is behind that. Science will always be restricted to the experienced-phenomenal world—beyond this there is no thoroughfare for it. We have, however, the right to speculate about what lies behind the veil, to *think*. Human reason is not exhausted in the work of the *understanding*: it can rise above the empirical, the physical, to the trans-physical, to the metaphysical.

Kant points out the advantages of this theory for philosophy. On the assumption that there is no distinction between things as objects of experience and things as things in themselves, we are forced to accept a mechanistic materialism. We could not say that the will is free (as a thing-in-itself) and at the same time determined (when conceived in time and space), for that would be a logical contradiction. If the soul is a *thing*, there is no possibility of saving its freedom. But if the *Critique* is true, the principle of causality has validity only in our perceived world, in the world of experience, and things spiritual are not subject to its law, but are spiritually discerned. The *Critique* has shown that freedom is *thinkable*. Morality presupposes responsibility, freedom; and there is no contradiction: freedom does not prevent the same act from being a part of the natural mechanism, which, remember, is only the way in which we organize our experience. Indeed, Kant says, I cannot even *assume* the existence of God, freedom, and immortality for *practical* use, unless I take away from speculative reason its presumption to extravagant knowledge. "Hence I had to destroy knowledge to have room for faith, for the dogmatism of metaphysics, that is, the prejudice that it can get along without the *Critique of Pure Reason* is the source of all disbelief which contradicts morality—a disbelief that is always quite dogmatic." "Some sort of metaphysics there has always been in the world and will most likely continue to be, and also a dialectic of pure reason, because the latter is natural to

it. It is therefore the first and most important concern of philosophy to remove every harmful influence of metaphysics once and for all by stopping up the source of errors."

Kant repudiated dogmatic metaphysics, uncritical metaphysics, all metaphysics that attempts to solve the problem of ultimate reality without previous examination of the power of reason. The traditional metaphysics offers itself as knowledge of the *understanding* that is demonstrable *a priori*. We can have such knowledge only in physics and mathematics; we can know *a priori* only the forms and categories of our *perceived* world. We cannot look for God and the soul in nature: they are not objects of experience among other objects, phenomena in the space, time, causal order. We can, therefore, have no such *a priori* knowledge of God, the cosmos, the soul, as the old metaphysics professes to have. Rational theology, rational cosmology, and rational psychology are in that sense pseudosciences. But to know as we know in physics, to know phenomena, is not the sole function of the mind. "To think an object and to know an object are not the same thing."<sup>4</sup> We can only *think* real reality, we cannot perceive it, intuit it. The real world is an intelligible world, a transphysical or metaphysical world, a world which cannot be "understood" but only "thought," but which is nevertheless real and true. Theoretical reason leads us to such an ideal world: beyond the phenomenal world it seeks the Unconditioned. Ideas create objects for themselves whose material is not taken from experience.

<sup>4</sup> "To know an object I must be able to prove its possibility (be it according to the testimony of experience from its reality, or *a priori* by reason). But I can *think* what I will so long as I do not contradict myself, so long as my concept is a possible thought, although I cannot guarantee that in the totality of all possibilities an object corresponds to it. However, in order to attribute *objective* validity to it (*real* possibility, for the former was merely logical), more is demanded; but this "more" need not be sought in theoretical sources of knowledge: it can also lie in *practical* sources." Otherwise, the absurd proposition would follow that appearance is without something that appears. (Preface to the second edition of the *Critique*, Erdmann's ed., p. 15.)



In other words, we can know in another sense of the term knowing. We have already seen that pure reason can know itself: the *Critique of Pure Reason* is the autobiography of reason. *Die Geisterwelt ist nicht verschlossen, dein Sinn ist zu, dein Herz ist todt.* The *Geist* thinks and writes the *Critique*. Moreover, this same reason, as practical (moral) reason, reveals the moral law, which can nowhere be found in scientific experience or validated by scientific principles; the moral law is the deliverance of reason; one might call it a creative act. Here we are in the world of pure reason, to which neither the forms of space and time nor the categories of science, substance and accident, cause and effect, apply. It would be absurd to speak of reason, of thought, as thick or thin, light or heavy, three-dimensional, as an attribute of the brain, or as an effect of the grouping of moving electrons: it does not exist as a thing, and hence the qualities and relations that belong to things cannot be applied to it. Kant was so fearful of making an entity, a substance, a thing, of the ego that he left it hanging in thin air in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. It is the keystone of his theory of knowledge, the vehicle of all concepts in general, the seat of its categories, the tie that binds.

Kant repudiated only the metaphysics of dogmatism, pseudo-metaphysics. Indeed, his aim was to establish metaphysics, to raise it from its previous condition of insecurity to the rank of *Wissenschaft*. The greatest obstacle in his path was materialism, and this he removed by his doctrine of phenomenalism. His transcendental dialectic destroyed the rational psychology, the rational cosmology, and the rational theology of the school, whose fallacies and contradictions had undermined our confidence in reason. His goal was the *mundus intelligibilis*. He regarded nothing more certain than that reality is at bottom an ideal teleological order, which has existence for thought—

*Dasein für das Denken*—but cannot be grasped by the *Verstand* or be made *anschaulich* to perception. “We could not *understand* it (the thing-in-itself) even if some one should tell us what it is.” Kant laid the foundations of objective idealism upon which his successors built their imposing structures. They brought the *Geist* which Kant left hanging in the heavens, where Plato, too, had put it, down to earth, and gave it work to do in the world. Schelling found its traces in nature: the principle which reveals itself in human thinking is not a stranger in the universe. Hegel sees it in the evolution of human history and human institutions: surely a field in which one might expect mind to manifest itself. And both these thinkers agreed with Kant that the natural-scientific method could not do justice to reality as it really is, that it stands helpless before the portals of the kingdom of the mind. The new light which flashed on Kant has cast its rays over nearly two hundred years of philosophical history, and we have still to reckon with it even if it be only to prove it a will-o-the wisp.

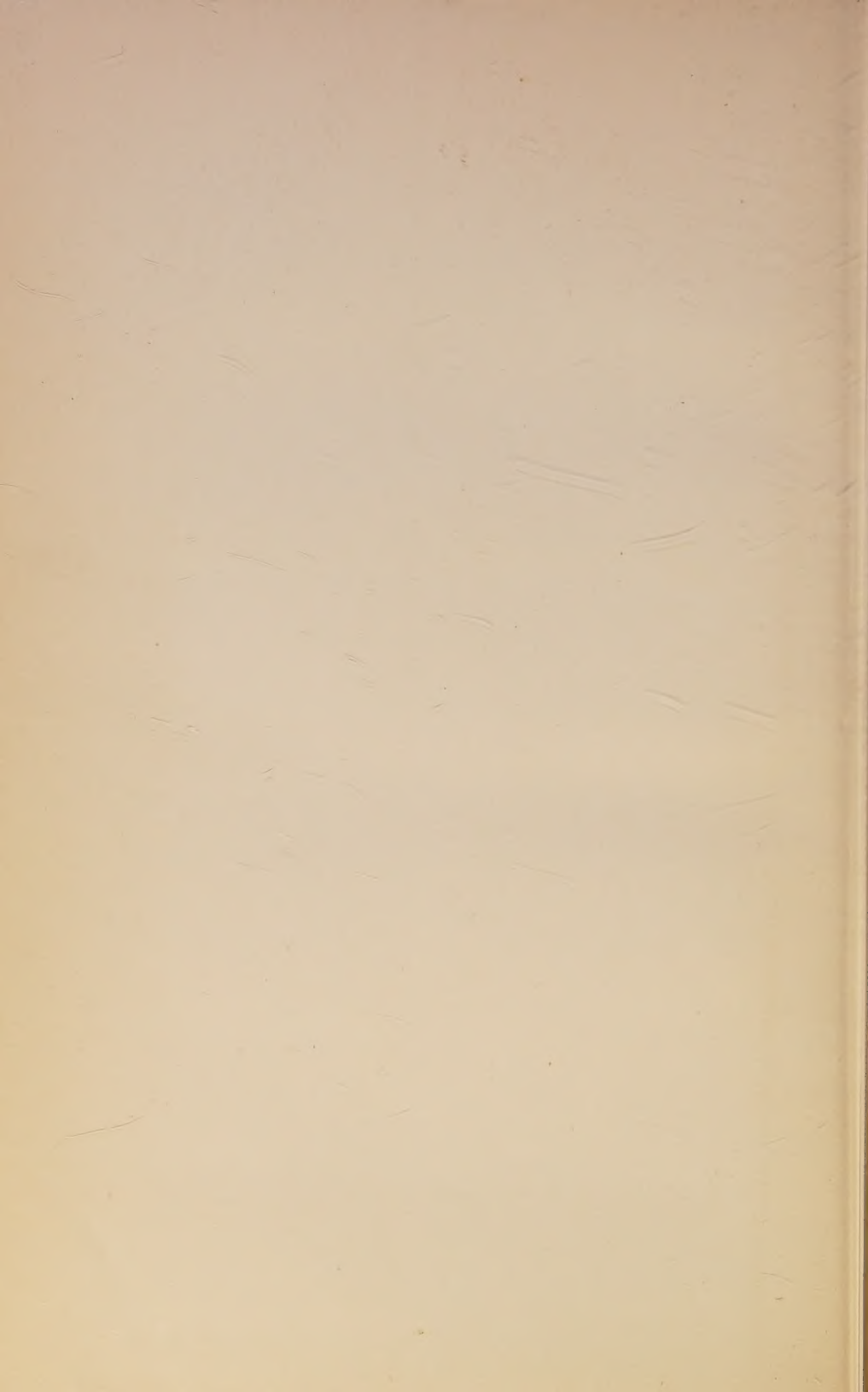
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